THE PIRATES OF DRINAX

TRAVELLER

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T R A V E L L E R

INTRODUCTION

The Pirates of Drinax is a complete campaign. If you are a Traveller in this campaign, STOP READING NOW! If you are a referee, then please proceed…

In *The Pirates of Drinax,* the Travellers play a band of adventurers who are entrusted by the King of Drinax with a letter of marque, permitting them to prey on 'illegal' trade within the borders of the vanished kingdom. The King hopes this piracy will give him the leverage he needs to restore Drinax to its former glory, and intends for the Travellers to win back all the planets lost over the last two centuries – but the King's plans are just the starting point for this campaign.

Once the Travellers have their letter of marque and ship, it's up to them what to do next. Will they stay loyal to their patron and help restore Drinax? Will they turn rogue and create their own kingdom? Will they be heroes or monsters, pirates or privateers? Will they make their fortune amid the pitiless stars, or will the cold depths of the Trojan Reach be their grave?

To run this campaign, you only need a copy of the *Traveller Core Rulebook.* Other books that are not strictly necessary, but highly recommended are:

- *High Guard,* for the expanded rules on ships and space combat.
- *Central Supply Catalogue,* useful in any Traveller campaign

The Pirates of Drinax is an episodic campaign. The ten set adventures (see the Campaign Overview chapter) are interspersed with wandering, raiding, thieving and the referee's own scenarios. However, the choice of its direction is up to the Travellers. The Trojan Reach is your sandbox – King Oleb intends for his newly-minted privateers to disrupt Imperial shipping and give him leverage to rebuild his kingdom, but that is just the starting point. The Travellers may choose a completely different course!

You should now grab the Trojan Reach book and read the starting chapters, up to and including Starting the Campaign.

C H A P T E R - O N E

CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

This will give you all the information available to the Travellers before the campaign begins and will hekp you understand what is going on from their perspective.

It will also start giving you some ideas on how to present this campaign to your Travellers. You may be happy to let them borrow the *Trojan Reach* book so they can study the setting in detail and arrive ready and raring to go. Alternatively, you might decide that you want to start the campaign by reading the text at the beginning of the Starting the Campaign chapter out loud to your Travellers, allowing you to characterise King Oleb for them from the start. This is all up to you as the referee. *The Pirates of Drinax* is a true sandbox campaign, adaptable to any play style and any set of Travellers! When you have read those chapters, come back here and continue!

The Pirates of Drinax is intended to be a 'sandbox' campaign. Once the Travellers take off from Drinax, they can go anywhere they want within the reach of their jump drive. Their fate is their own – if they want to follow King Oleb's plan, and build a privateer-funded alliance of worlds, they can. If they want to steal the Harrier and become renegade pirate kings, that's an option too. They may end their adventures ruling the stars, or swinging from a noose.

Early in the campaign, the Travellers are based on Drinax, and are likely to return to that world again and again for resupply and aid. Later, they may decide to strike out on their own. The campaign rules on page 9 cover wandering the stars, preying on shipping, and commanding a crew of pirates. Use this as a framework for your own adventures. There are innumerable ways a pirate crew could be drawn into a more complicated and perilous adventure. For example:

- An old pirate tells them about a fabled lost pirate ship that misjumped with a huge treasure in her hold. Find the ship, find the treasure.
- One of the passengers on board an ambushed ship turns out to be a noblewoman in disguise. She is a last-ditch diplomatic envoy between the Imperium and the Hierate on a mission to avert a war. Do the Travellers aid her, or turn war profiteers?
- The ship's navigator dies in a tavern brawl, and a replacement is needed. The Travellers learn of a navigational prodigy, a savant who can calculate the most accurate jumps in an instant – but he's imprisoned in a madhouse on a backwards planet. Can they break into the asylum and retrieve this troubled genius?
- Spies report to the Travellers, telling them that one of their old Enemies is on the move. The Travellers have a chance to intercept their enemy's ship and put an end to him – but to do so, they need to track down his ship, capture it, storm it, and fight a duel with their old foe.
- Fleeing Imperial pirate hunters, the Travellers jump into an isolated system and uncover the ruins of a long-dead civilisation.

In addition to referee-created scenarios, the Pirates of Drinax campaign contains ten epic adventures. The first nine of these can be run in (almost) any order, intermixed with the referee's own creations. The tenth and final adventure determines the success of King Oleb's grand plan and the fate of those who received a letter of marque from his hands.

These adventures are divided into Heists – adventures where the Travellers steal something valuable and piratical – and Perils, where the tide of events overtakes the Travellers and they must fight to survive.

HEISTS

Honour Among Thieves

Raiders from coreward strike the old Drinaxian worlds of Torpol and Clarke, looting their orbital factories and destroying their system defence boats. These raiders are no desperate brigands – they have the weapons, technology and discipline that mark them as dangerous corsairs. The Provosts of Torpol and the Psychopomps of Clarke put a combined bounty of the heads of those accursed raiders. Anyone who brings back proof of the raiders' death will be showered in lanthanum and gold.

Tracking the raiders brings the Travellers to the pirate world of Theev. There, on the walkways and alleyways of Port Blacksand, the Travellers must find the raiders – but the shadowy rulers of Theev are always watchful. Can the Travellers complete their mission and escape the pirates' world, or will they have to make alliances with untrustworthy rogues to survive? Bringing the raiders to justice will bring Torpal and Clarke closer towards alliance with Drinax, but at what cost? And

what triggered the raid? The shadows of Port Blacksand hide a thousand secrets and a thousand knives...

Treasure Ship

The crossing from the Imperium to the Hierate winds its way across the Trojan Reach. Every month, convoys of freighters escorted by Imperial warships make the long journey from Pax Rulin to the Aslan worlds. Jump after jump, system after system – and at every step of the way, the convoy risks disruption or attack. The most important and closely protected ships are the fabled 'treasure ships'. These small, heavily guarded freighters carry the most important cargoes. Dust-spice, anagathics, alien artefacts, sealed letters between the Imperial government and the Hierate, and who knows what else. Capturing a treasure ship is every pirate's dream.

Ambushing such a ship is futile – even a pirate fleet would be hard pressed to capture a treasure ship before the Imperial escorts blasted them to space dust. You would need more than stealth, cunning and daring – you would need a huge stroke of luck.

Like, say, hearing the news that an Imperial treasure ship suffered an engine malfunction, and has put in at Arunisiir for repairs. All the Travellers need to do is get to Arunisiir, get one or more agents on board, come up with a plan to steal the treasure, and execute it under watchful eyes of the escort ships...

The Demon's Eye

Techworld is a bizarre aberration, a high-technology colony where mad scientists carry out experiments banned by the Shield Church clerics of Neumann. Beyond the church's reach, the scientists meddle with dangerous technologies... and something's gone wrong. One of the scientists fell victim to her own experiment, and she is now becoming something inhuman. The Travellers are hired to capture her before she reaches the Imperium. Exploring the bizarre machine world, the Travellers learn the strange history of Neumann, and discover that the scientist was working on a solution to save her world from the dissembler plague.

Tracking the scientist brings the Travellers into Imperial space. They catch up with her on Mirage where they battle assassins sent by the Shield Church. The scientist begs the Travellers to help her tame the nano-swarms – but to do that, they will need to outwit the machine demigod called the Immortal Protector.

The Treasure of Sindal

Thousands of years ago, the Sindalian empire collapsed in blood and fire. Where once the Dragon Emperor ruled over a hundred worlds, now there is nothing but ash and crumbling ruins. Still, old Noricum is a legend-haunted planet. They say that, on the night before the capital fell, the last Emperor ordered that the treasury be placed on board a starship and sent to a hiding place.

Could the treasure hoard of the old emperors still be out there among the stars? A chance visit by an archaeologist to the Floating Palace puts the characters on the trail of the hidden fortune – but they're not the only ones chasing the prize. This adventure takes the characters across the sector on an interstellar treasure hunt! Three rival pirates are also after the treasure, so the characters must play their rival off against each other in order to be the ones who finally recover the treasure of Sindal.

Blood of The Star Dragon

Princess Rao has been kidnapped!

The presumptive heir to the throne of Drinax vanishes from the Floating Palace, and the kingdom is thrown into anarchy. Prince Harrick, the other potential heir, travelled to Asim mere hours before his sister disappeared. Is he planning a coup, or has some other villain taken advantage of the rift between the two siblings to sow dissent? Did Rao's involvement in interstellar diplomacy force some enemy's hand? Or could Rao herself have fled Drinax for some reason? Unable to trust his courtiers, not even the captain of his guards, King Oleb asks the Travellers to investigate the kidnapping of his daughter.

The quest for the princess takes the Travellers from Drinax to Asim, and involves both palace intrigue and bloody firefights. Of course, the Travellers may have their own ideas about Rao's fate. Holding the princess of Drinax would give the pirates control over the nascent Kingdom...

PERILS

Ihatei!

Spies report the gathering of a huge number of Aslan second sons in the camps of Kteiroa, only two parsecs from Drinax. The ihatei are an explosive threat – if a charismatic leader emerges, he could lead an invasion across the border. This threat must be defused, so the Travellers are sent into Aslan space. Their mission is to ensure that no warlord unites the ihatei into a fighting force.

The Travellers learn that the influx of ihatei comes from a minor Aslan clan, the Htyowao. For decades, the Htyowao and their rivals, the Hkaaiheir, have been locked in combat over the world of Keaih. After multiple triumphs, the Hkaaiheir seem about to win the way, and ihatei who would normally go seeking glory under the banner of the Htyowao are now turning their eyes elsewhere. The best way for the Travellers to preserve Drinax is to prolong the war...

The Game of Sun and Shadow

Too many bites from insects, and the elephant stirs. A detachment of Imperial warships departs the fleet base at Pax Rulin, heading out into the wild space of the Trojan Reach. These pirate hunters are a threat to every raider and privateer in the sector – including the Travellers.

The Travellers escape the initial sweep, but dozens of other pirates are captured by the Imperium and taken back to Pax Rulin in chains. If the Travellers could chase the warships back to the fleet base and break their pirate comrades out of prison, it would make their reputation and tweak the nose of the Imperial powers.

The Vorito Gambit

The Travellers capture a minor prize – a courier ship. Such small vessels normally are not worth a pirate's time, but this one is different. The courier belongs to the General Development Corporation, a megacorporation set up to foster trade and commerce throughout the sector. Searching the courier, the Travellers find a hidden cache of documents that reveal the corporation's sinister purpose – GeDeCo's agents manipulate worlds across the Trojan Reach to create a buffer against the Aslan. They have spies everywhere – including Drinax! The merchant Rachando is a secret agent for GeDeCo.

Confronting the spy on Drinax, the villain begs for his life. If they spare him, Rachando will help the Travellers loot the bank vault of the GeDeCo headquarters. Can the Travellers get past the corporation's defences and break into the vault without being found? What is GeDeCo's real purpose? Was Rachando telling the truth when he turned his coat?

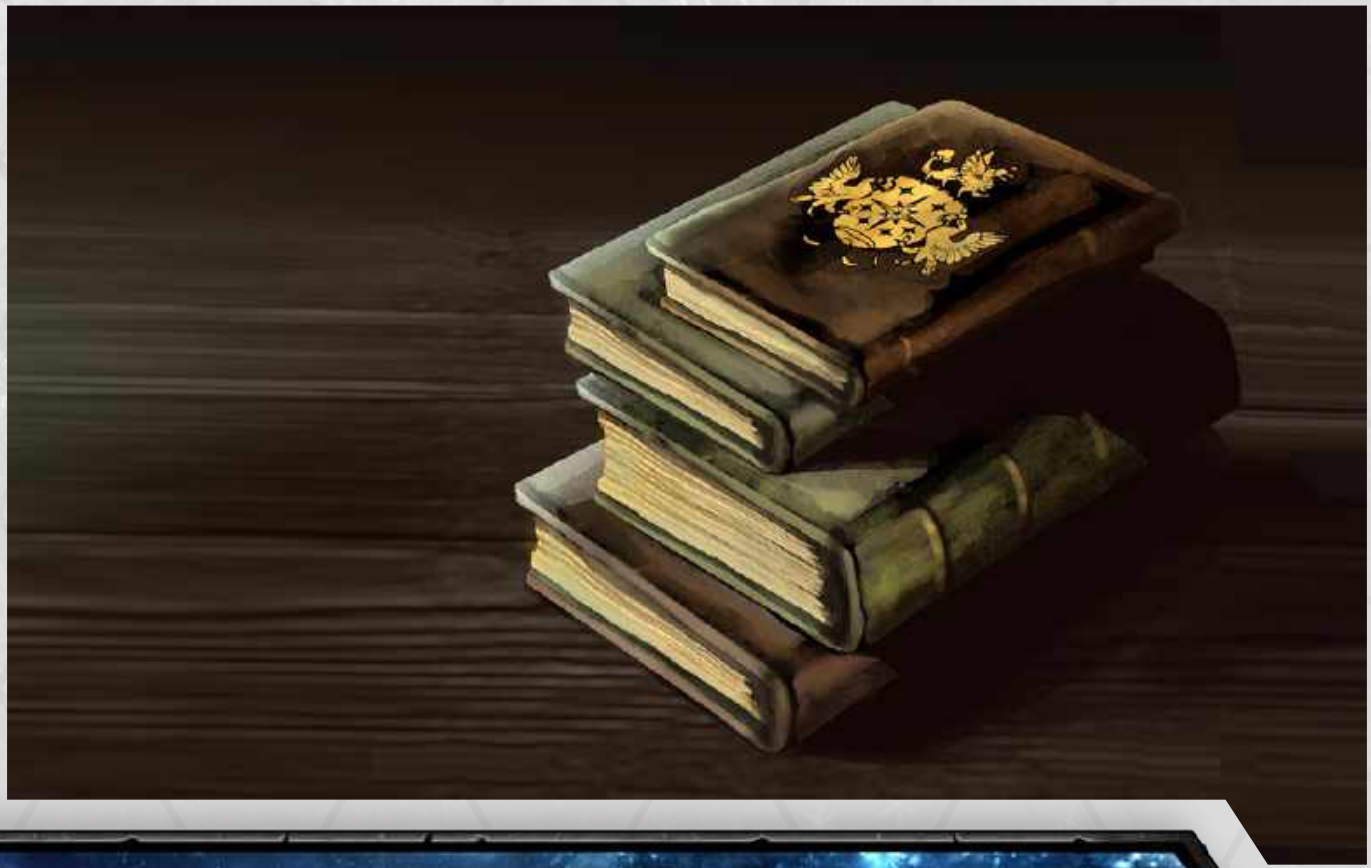
The Prodigal Outcast

The exiled Aslan Kasiyl of the Ahroay'if comes to the Travellers with a proposal. He confesses his secret shame – he was cast out of his family for accidentally murdering a lord from a rival clan. If the Travellers help him prove that he was framed for the deed, then he will reward them as only an Aslan prince can. To restore Kasiyl's honour, the Travellers must travel deep into the Hierate and grapple with the strange rituals and rites of Aslan society.

If they fail, then they will be trapped behind enemy lines with two clans hunting them...

Finale

The lion roars! An Aslan invasion fleet reaches out to conquer the Trojan Reach. With no hope of stopping the invasion fleet in open battle, the Travellers must use all the skills and contacts they have gathered over the course of the campaign to disrupt the enemy supply lines, capture their couriers, and save Drinax before the Floating Palace falls. If the Travellers have made allies across the Reach, they can lead a grand alliance of worlds to defeat the Aslan. If not, then the whole sector will inevitably fall under the claw of the cat!



RUMOURS OF THE REACH

D66	Rumour	D66	Rumour
11	An Aslan trade convoy vanished near Acrid. No debris, no reports of weapons fire. Could a dozen ships have misjumped simultaneously?	41	No Aslan raider will attack a ship carrying one of the clan gods. Just get the right figurine and you're safe from then.
12	There's an asteroid in the Sperle system that's 90% gold and platinum.	42	The Ghost of Sindal flies an invisible starship. It's got an Ancient cloaking device.
13	It's bad luck to jump without first praying to the Starry-Eyed God who rules the space between the stars.	43	There's a Solomani colony flotilla still travelling at sublight speeds through the Trojan Reach. Millions of colonists in deep freeze, looking for a home.
14	Blacksand City on Theev is secretly ruled by Hivers.	44	An Imperial noble is travelling the Reach in disguise, hunting exotic animals.
15	The rulers of Byrni want to build a Highport to control traffic through their system.	45	The rulers of the Ahroay'if clan – the richest Aslan in Tliowaha subsector – are all addicted to dustspice.
16	There are secret Imperial refuelling stations at empty hexes in the Sindal sector.	46	The Ine Givar are building a fleet of warships in the Trojan Reach. They're going to launch an invasion of Corridor sector and cut the Marches off from the Imperium.
21	Aslan pirate hunters can't detect you if you hide in the upper atmosphere of a gas giant.	51	Any pirate who reveals the jump co-ordinates of Theev is flayed alive and their skin is flown as a flag over Port Blacksand.
22	The solar flares on Pandora block travel through the system once every seven years.	52	There's a Zhodani agent at large in the Reach who'll pay for information about Imperial shipping & defences.
23	The Imperium allows the scientists on Techworld to experiment with illegal technologies.	53	The legendary pirate Scurrilous Dave buried his treasure hoard somewhere on the moon of Homestead.
24	Admiral Darokyn's flagship, the Sorrowful Maiden, has a damaged port sensor array.	54	There's an impurity in the atmosphere of the gas giant in Cordan. If you refuel by scooping, it'll fry your jump drive.
25	There's a secret conspiracy of Aslan females who defy convention and own property on human worlds, working through human agents.	55	The Emperors of Sindal were immortal – they only died by murder. They knew about a perfect anagathic, but the secret was lost when the Empire fell.
26	There's an old woman who runs the Starport bar on Falcon who knows more about freighter schedules and how to rb them than anyone else.	56	If the Imperium capture you, you can avoid execution if you ask for a transfer to the Scout Service instead. They'll send you on the most dangerous, suicidal mission they have, but at least it's a chance...
31	Never trust a Vargr with a gold tooth.	61	There's a lost ruby mine on Paal that was overrun with monsters from offworld.
32	Every ship from the Tobia Commerce Guild carries at least six trained marines on board to repel pirates.	62	The Aslan card game called Lion's Paw is fixed – never bet against a cat holding purple suns.
33	The Yarrow, a 50,000 ton megafreighter that misjumped six years ago, was sighted drifting through deep space near Marduk.	63	The Imperium can track you through jump space if you jump away within 5,000 km of one of their ships.
34	It's good luck to leave a cargo container behind after looting a prize.	64	There's a clerk on Fist who can be bribed to learn the cargo manifest of every ship that leaves port.
35	The Jolly Roger hullplate from Scurrilous Dave's pirate ship is somewhere on Pourne.	65	Go to the starport on Camoran. Find the arms dealer. Say 'Never Forget' to her. She'll tell you what to do next.
36	The madmen who live on the space station called The World have strange psychic powers.	66	The Space Kraken is hungry this year...

C H A P T E R - T W O

RUNNING THE PIRATES OF DRINAX

Make *The Pirates of Drinax* your own. Add in your own adventures, and let the whims of the dice affect the course of your campaign. If the Travellers make a catastrophic error and crash their ship on a deserted planet, don't fudge the result – let them struggle to find a way offworld and back to space. This is a true sandbox campaign where anything can happen!

WHY DRINAX?

Why lavish all this attention on a single planet that has never played a major part in the *Third Imperium universe*, especially as the Travellers are likely to leave it at the start of the campaign? Why not just say to the Travellers 'you are *pirates* – off you go'?

There are three reasons why we chose Drinax as the starting point for this campaign.

Firstly, you'll need a context for piracy. Pirates don't randomly set sail attacking merchants – there are always reasons for the pirates to risk their lives, and reasons for the merchants to be there in the first place. Drinax, with its lost empire and its position between the Aslan Hierate and the Third Imperium, fulfills both these requirements, and making the Travellers semi-legal privateers instead of villainous pirates means that any sort of Traveller, from the most blood-thirsty rogue to an honourable noble, can take part in the campaign.

Secondly, Drinax makes a great home base for a pirate, without providing an overwhelming advantage. The Travellers can retreat there for repairs, shelter or advice, or to sell off their ill-gotten gains.

Thirdly, the fate of Drinax provides the spine of the campaign's metaplot. Whether the Travellers fight to save Drinax or profit from its doom, the last days or rebirth of the Kingdom drive events throughout the campaign.

REFEREEING THE PIRATES OF DRINAX

This campaign calls for a light touch from the referee. Encourage the Travellers to buckle their swashes and chew the scenery. Make everything technicolour. The court of Drinax should feel like a Shakespearean drama, with feuding nobles and conniving courtiers. Make the Imperium feel like an invincible, insurmountable and ancient foe by describing its vast size and vaster bureaucracy. Play the Aslan as exotic aliens; play the worlds of the Trojan Reach as isolated islands in a sea of stars. Go for lurid, weird descriptions; draw inspiration from *Dune* as well as *Firefly.* Mix in real-world pirate traditions and slang.

Pin the sector map of the Trojan Reach to the wall of your gaming room. Let the Travellers pour over the chart and plan their next moves. Track their course and the movements of rival pirates and shipping convoys on the map; note which ports are friendly and which ports want to hang the Travellers. By the end of the campaign, the map should look like a tangled web of intrigue and adventure.

Follow the Travellers, not the plot. If the Travellers want to go take over a planet and turn it into their own little kingdom, run with that. If they decide to start a war between the Imperium and the Hierate, let them try. Give the Travellers the freedom of open space.

BUILDING ALLIANCES

Keep the Travellers' Standing and their relationship with the various ports in the foreground of the game. Pirates don't exist in a vacuum, so to speak; there's no point in stealing cargo if you have no place to sell it and spend your winnings. Encourage the Travellers to work to win planets over to their side. Every system that becomes a Haven is a victory for them – and always remind them of the impending threat of retaliation from one of the great imperial powers.

Mark the attitude of each port on the map, so the Travellers can see their influence spread. If they have enough allies, they can survive the storm that hits at the end of the campaign.

THE PIRATE LIFE

Piracy breeds problems. A repetitive pirate is a dead one. If the same pirate attacks freighters landing at Wildeman six times in as many months, then the seventh freighter will be a q-ship packed with concealed interceptors and a brigade of Imperial marines. Reward the Travellers when they move on to new systems and stay ahead of the pirate hunters; punish them unmercifully if they stick to the same hunting grounds for too long. Success breeds danger; failure breeds mutiny.

Encourage the Travellers to plan their heists, instead of just jumping in and looking for likely prey. The random piracy rules assume no preparation on the part of the Travellers, but a good pirate has a network of spies and messengers to provide advance notice of likely targets and approaching dangers.

Remember to characterise the crew. Be broad with your portrayals of the cutthroats and hired guns employed by the Travellers – one distinctive personality trait is enough for most of them. If the Travellers take an interest in one of the NPCs, you can develop that pirate's history and personality further. The crew also make obvious replacements for deceased or departed Travellers.

BOOKKEEPING & FINANCES

Let the Travellers handle the book-keeping – there's usually one Traveller in the group who delights in spreadsheets and tracking credits on hand. The rewards of piracy vary wildly. One rich freighter's cargo can be worth hundreds of millions of credits, and that's even before you get to the prize ships. The high cost of goods and equipment in *Traveller* means that piracy can be extremely lucrative if the pirates get lucky.

While the basic costs (fuel, maintenance, life support, ammo and repairs) are set and unchanging, you can adjust other economic factors to keep the Travellers on the edge of poverty if necessary. If the Travellers are struggling, then let them gain the support of unaligned worlds cheaply by adventuring. If you need to drain their coffers, then have the unaligned worlds demand expensive upgrades like Highports, System Defences Boats, shipyards and automated factories.

Optionally, you can dispense with most of the book-keeping entirely, assume the Travellers are making ends meet most of the time, and focus on big, dramatic shifts in their situation. If the Travellers get a big score, give them a choice of ways to spend it – do they buy a new ship? Upgrade a friendly port? Invest in a legitimate business? Fund a mercenary army?

THE COURT AT DRINAX

The court of King Oleb is the Travellers' home base; King Oleb summons them to report on their progress at infrequent intervals. As the Travellers' piratical endeavours prove successful, they will be courted by the factions at court.

Princess Rao came up with the idea of attacking Imperial shipping under a false flag to force concessions, but she has no desire to marry an uncouth pirate. If any of the Travellers intend to accept King Oleb's offer of his daughter's hand, they will need to prove themselves a worthy match for a princess.

Prince Harrick is an enigma. Is he still sane? Is he jealous of his younger sister? Is he a pawn of some other faction, or a hero in waiting who will prove himself in the coming war?

Lord Wrax is an obstacle for the Travellers to overcome. He wants them gone from the court; the Travellers must either prove their worth or else discredit Lord Wrax's objections. Scholar Voha is an exposition dispenser for background about the Sindalian Empire and the Trojan Reach, while the Imperial ambassador Thao Poloc is there mainly for comic relief, as the Travellers must ensure he never finds out that they are pirates.

Some of the other courtiers all have their own goals and interests that can be advanced with the help of the Travellers. Do the Travellers help the oppressed Asimen, or work with the Vespexers to restore Drinax? If Lady Hil insinuates that she can help the Travellers at court, what does she want in exchange?

Several of the courtiers play key roles in upcoming adventures; Kasiyl (*The Prodigal Outcast*), Rachando *(The Vorito Gambit*) and Sal Dancet (Ihatei!) are all important NPCs in adventures to come.

CHAPTER-THREE

A PIRATE'S LIFE FOR ME

The Pirates of Drinax starts when the Travellers receive their letter of marque from King Oleb. However, pirates need places to put in for repairs, to refuel, and to sell their ill-gotten goods. Unlike a legitimate trader who can do business at any port, pirates either frequent lawless worlds, or else establish networks of contacts and fences who can handle stolen goods at otherwise lawful starports. Remember, unlike the more civilised Spinward Marches, the Imperium does not control the starports of the Trojan Reach. Each world's port is its own affair.

In this campaign, starports are classified not only by their letter rating (A-E), but also by their relationship with the pirates. Ports can be Havens, Friendly, Tolerant, Neutral, Suspicious, Unfriendly or Hostile.

Haven ports are either part of the pirate's organisation, or count the pirates as their own ships. Not only are pirates able to land here, the port's System Defence Boats and the local population will defend the pirates against enemy ships and pirate hunters. At the start of the campaign, only Drinax counts as a haven.

Friendly ports are willing accomplices in the piratical trade. While they will not take up arms to defend the pirates in open battle, they will do everything else they can to help the crew, such as repairing battle damage without asking questions, providing replacement crew, and fencing stolen goods.

Tolerant ports are willing to turn a blind eye to fencing goods, and may even provide repair facilities without too many questions, but are otherwise not involved in piracy. The Travellers can land freely, but must keep a low profile.

Neutral ports are willing to take the Travellers' money, but offer no protection. If the Travellers bring trouble, the port authorities will turn on them.

Suspicious ports are law-abiding and have reason to suspect the Travellers are pirates. Everything is more difficult at suspicious ports. The Travellers can still land here, but can expect to be searched or detained.

Unfriendly ports do not tolerate pirates. Landing here is not permitted; if the Travellers try, they will be arrested. If they linger in the system, system defence boats will be deployed to chase them away.

The pirate ship will be fired upon as soon as it arrives at a hostile port. The Travellers' faces are on wanted holograms throughout the starport; the sensor profile of their ship is logged with every listening post and System Defence Boat in the system.

Port	Fence %	Recruitment	Risk Arrest	Risk Spies	Protection
Haven	30%	3+	-	12+	3+
Friendly	25%	5+	-	12+	7+
Tolerant	20%	7+	12+	10+	11+
Tolerant	10%	9+	12+	10+	-
Suspicious	10%	11+	10+	8+	-
Unfriendly	-	12+	10+	8+	-
Hostile	-	-	2+	2+	-

Fence %: The share the Travellers receive of pirated goods sold at the port. For example, at a haven, the pirates get 30% of the normal value of stolen goods. See Division of the Spoils on page 12.

Recruitment: The chance to recruit replacement crew at that port. Note that this roll just determines the presence of willing volunteers, and does not guarantee they have the necessary experience and skills.

Risk Arrest: When the Travellers land at this port, the referee should roll 2D against the listed number. If the roll succeeds, then the local authorities will attempt to detain the Travellers.

Risk Spies: When the Travellers depart the port, the referee should roll 2D against the listed number. If the roll succeeds, then a spy at the port reports their presence and heading to the Travellers' enemies, if any.

Protection: If the Travellers are attacked in space controlled by the port, roll 2D against the listed target number. If the roll succeeds, the port's defences help protect the Travellers.

STARTING LEVELS

At the start of the campaign, ports have the following attitudes towards the Travellers.

- Drinax is the only Haven at the start of the campaign.
- Theev is the only Friendly port at the start of the campaign.
- All Aslan ports are Unfriendly.
- Other ports have their status determined by Law Level, as determined by the Port Attitude table.

PORT ATTITUDE

Law Level	Attitude
2-	Tolerant
3-5	Neutral
6-9	Suspicious
10-11	Unfriendly
12+	Hostile

UPGRADING PORTS

Over the course of the campaign, the Travellers can alter the attitude of a port towards them, by:

- Making contacts and completing patron missions
- Spending money in the port on improvements, upgrades, repairs or bribes.
- Donating captured ships and equipment.

The costs for doing so vary from port to port and some examples are given on page 263.

CREW

While the starting Drinaxi Harrier can be flown with only a handful of shiphands, pirate ships traditionally carry a full complement of crew, and with good reason – when you are boarding an enemy ship, weight of numbers can often carry the day. Pirate ships also need engineers, pilots, navigators and gunners, especially if the pirates intend to capture prizes instead of just looting them.

The life of a pirate is dangerous and likely to be short. The rewards must therefore be very lucrative. Pirate crew are paid twice – they get their normal pay for their regular duties (as determined by the Pay Rates table), but are also due a share of any proceeds from looted cargo and prizes. See Division of the Spoils on page 12.

PAY RATES

Position	Key Skills	Base Salary/month
Pilot	Pilot, Electronics, Tactics (naval)	Cr6000
Navigator	Astrogation, Electronics	Cr5000
Engineer	Engineer, Mechanic	Cr4000
Medic	Medic, Zero-G, Life Science, Steward	Cr4000
Gunner	Gunner, Mechanic, Electronics	Cr2000
Marine	Athletics (dexterity), Gun Combat, Melee, Vacc Suit, Zero-G	Cr2000

The skill and experience of crew members varies wildly. As a rule of thumb:

- A green recruit has DM+0 for their key skills, and DM-2 for other skills.
- An average crewman has DM+1 for their key skills, and DM+0 for other skills.
- A good pirate has DM+2 for their key skills, and DM+1 for other skills. A good pirate may demand extra shares of loot.

- An excellent crewman has DM+3 for their key skills, and DM+2 for other skills. An excellent pirate of this sort certainly deserves extra shares of loot.
- A legendary pirate has DM+4 for their key skills, and DM+2 for other skills. If you don't give a legendary pirate extra shares, he'll cut your throat and take your ship from you.

The Crewman Names and Quirks tables can be used to give flavor and character to recruits.

CREWMAN NAMES

11	Black Jack	41	Tom Vargrface
12	Cyrex	42	Scarlet Sal
13	Adro Venniser	43	Pete the Stench
14	Penitent Grim	44	Shayra Ventassen
15	Jim Cheese	45	Drax the Knifer
16	Sutton Vries	46	Little Cleo
21	Nosetter Hali	51	Streph Falter
22	William Magnus	52	Clonehand Brimmer
23	Abra Harper	53	Opal Twice-Vacced
24	Scarr	54	Catkiller Targ
25	Ben Parr	55	Fat Florian
26	Kolx Hawk	56	Cerdic
31	Master Dank	61	Old Jaek
32	Golim Gryer	62	Laerte
33	Edd Law	63	Ramsay Grog
34	Kagni Vasiir	64	Sperric
35	Silent Unter	65	Belit the Reaver
36	Wulf Bloodaxe	66	Ed Tech

CREWMAN QUIRKS

11	Cybernetic leg	41	Bloodthirsty
12	Alcoholic	42	Get space-sick
13	Hungry for revenge	43	Always nervous
14	Always carries a knife	44	Tells lengthy stories about the good old days
15	Multicoloured hair or beard	45	Horribly scarred
16	Once shot a man in District 268, just to watch him die	46	Eyepatch
21	Believes he has psionic powers	51	Sings spacer shanties
22	Wants to be in charge	52	Has a grudge against a PC
23	Cybernetic Hand	53	Former farmer
24	Paranoid	54	Smells really bad
25	Collects alien curios	55	Girl in every port
26	Always hungry	56	Alleged cannibal
31	Demands his own cabin	61	Murderous rogue
32	Ran away to space at a young age	62	Ex-Imperial navy
33	Former barbarian	63	Network of contacts
34	Has a genetically engineered parrot	64	Ambitious
35	Dying of an exotic disease	65	Coward
36	Covered in prison tattoos	66	Bad temper

MORALE

Morale (MOR) is a special characteristic that applies to the whole crew. The crew's MOR starts at 1D+6. MOR works like other characteristics – it provides a DM to some dice rolls, and can suffer damage.

If the crew's MOR drops too low, they become discontented. At MOR 0, the crew mutiny and attempt to overthrow the current leadership and seize the ship for themselves.

The Referee should make a MOR check when:

- The ship is endangered (Hull reduced to less than 10% of it starting value)
- The crew are ordered to risk their lives
- The crew have to endure undue hardship
- The captain and pirate leadership are divided or indecisive

Morale Damage: If a MOR check is failed, the crew's MOR takes 1D damage.

MOR also drops by 1:

- For every month that goes by without a division of the spoils (see page 12).
- For any failed attempt to capture cargo or prizes

Restoring Morale: MOR increases by 1 when:

- The ship captures a considerable amount of cargo or a prize
- The pirate leadership reward the crew with shore leave, intoxicants and other pleasures

DIVISION OF THE SPOILS

According to ancient and inviolate tradition, the crew of a pirate ship have a share in any proceeds from their larceny. These shares are divided when the pirate ship is in a safe harbour and any captured cargo has been sold.

The loot is usually divided as follows:

- First, King Oleb of Drinax demands 10% of the proceeds from any piracy. If the Travellers refuse him his royal tithe, they lose the benefits of the letter of marque and make an enemy of Drinax.
- Second, work out the total number of shares. Every ordinary crewman has one share; the Travellers have two shares each, and the captain has five shares.
- Finally, divide the total value of the spoils by the total number of shares to work out the value of each share.

RETAINING CREW

When there is a Division of the Spoils, some of the crew may choose to leave. For each crew member, roll 2D + the crew's MOR against a target number of 6+. If the roll fails, that crewman chooses to depart the ship at the next Tolerant or better starport.

STANDING

There are two great powers who cast long shadows over the whole Trojan Reach – the Third Imperium and the Aslan Hierate. A pirate ship's Standing with these two powers determines how they react to the pirate's activities. Both sides are willing to ignore minor acts of larceny and extortion as long as it does not impact the flow of trade, and both sides are secretly in favour of attacks upon the other by pirates – the fewer Aslan merchants in space, the more likely the Imperium is to dominate the trade routes, and vice versa. However, if the pirates are too brazen and their Standing drops too far, the Imperial powers will respond with violence.

Standing with the Imperium starts at 0; Standing with the Aslan Hierate starts at -5. These are modified as follows.

Stealing Cargo: -1 per incident in which more than Cr100000 is stolen.

Per Infamous Incident: -1D for incidents where the pirates steal a large amount of cargo, capture ships, and otherwise 'rock the boat'.

Per Atrocity: -1D for incidents where the pirates destroy ships, murder prisoners or otherwise breach the code of the stars.

Per Interference: -1D for incidents where the pirates attack Imperial scoutships, couriers or registered convoys, damage starports or refuelling stations, or otherwise interfere with the flow of trade.

Per Heroic Deed: +1D for attacking pirates or inflicting significant damage on the other Imperial power.

Per Month Elapsed Without Incident: Over time, Standing trends towards its starting point. The Travellers' Standing moves one point towards its starting position (0/-5) after each month in which the pirates do nothing of consequence.

These rolls can be combined. For example, an incident in which a pirate steals millions of credits worth of cargo, destroys an Imperial escort and guns down fleeing escape pods would qualify as an Infamous Incident, an Atrocity and Interference, so the pirate's Standing with the Imperium would drop by 3D+1.

However, the Aslan would be pleased by this setback to the Imperium, so the pirate's standing with the Hierate rises by 1D.

EFFECTS OF STANDING

Standing	Effects
20+	**Ally:** The pirates are rewarded for their heroic efforts. All ports belonging to the Imperial power are now Friendly, and the pirates gain SOC+2 within the Imperial power's territory.
6 to 20	**Tolerated:** The Imperial power is willing to overlook the pirate's excesses. All ports belonging to that power are now Tolerant of that pirate.
-5 to +5	**Ignored:** No effect.
-6 to -20	**Irritant:** A bounty is placed on the pirate's head of Cr1000 x 1D x the pirate's Standing (reversing the negative).
-21 to -40	**Infamy:** A patrol is dispatched to hunt down trouble in the reach, including the pirate menace.
-40+	**Enemy of the State!** The pirate is hounded by agents of the Imperial power, ranging from assassins to naval ships. The attitude of any ports not already Friendly or better drops by one level.

UPGRADING & REPAIRING SHIPS

The Drinaxi Harrier that the Travellers start the campaign with is a fine ship, but ambitious Travellers may dream of commanding a larger warship, or even commanding a fleet of pirate ships and calling themselves pirate admirals (while miserly pirates might prefer a ship that is less distinctive and cheaper to maintain). Any captured ship can be refitted with weapons and turned into a pirate ship, and the Travellers can order new ships like Corsairs at the shipyards of Theev. Several adventures in the campaign also include the opportunity to obtain different ships.

Extra ships can be placed under the control of non-player characters, and can either take part in the Travellers' attacks or else sent off to conduct their own raiding. By default, a pirate admiral takes 10% off the top of any loot taken by subordinate ships.

Damage to ships must be repaired at a suitable port (ideally, a Class C or better starport).

PIRACY

Like most dangerous professions, piracy consists mostly of waiting and watching; 99% boredom mixed with 1% terror and violence. These rules skip over the waiting and watching to concentrate on the hunt, the chase and the kill.

THE CODE OF THE STARS

There is an unwritten code of understanding between pirates, merchants and the great powers. While stealing cargo is a crime, the cost of hunting down and exterminating such a pirate is far more than the value of the cargo that pirate is likely to steal over the course of a career. Some small-time pirates have survived for years by never taking more than the insurance companies and trading corporations can bear. As long as a pirate only takes cargo (or better yet, accepts bribes to leave a trader pass freely), the great powers will turn a blind eye to the corsair, at least for a few months. A pirate who intercepts a ship, steals a few tons of cargo, and leaves both merchant ship and crew unharmed is not considered a major threat.

Killing crew, stealing ships or attacking Imperial convoys, though, is a different measure. Pirates who breach this unwritten code draw attention to themselves, and must be destroyed! Neither the Hierate nor the Third Imperium can tolerate any challenge to their authority.

FINDING PREY

The trade route between the Third Imperium and the Aslan Hierate is prime hunting territory for ambitious pirates. The cargo ships that ply those routes are heavy with valuable cargo, and the comparative lack of civilised worlds along the way means the pirates are less likely to run into System Defence Boats or pirate hunters. To avoid attack, most merchants travel in convoys escorted by either military vessels or armed mercenaries, but there are always a few unlucky ships who either cannot afford an escort or lose it along the way in a mistimed jump.

Beyond the trade routes, the pickings are thinner. While there are always free traders and vagabonds chancing their luck in the backwaters of the Reach, pirates are less likely to find a suitable target in systems off the beaten track.

When a pirate attempts to locate prey, roll on the Prey Encounter table to determine the most likely target. A result of 'no prey' does not mean there are no other ships in the system, it just implies that there are no other ships the pirate has a chance of successfully tackling right now, although this may change at any moment if a ship jumps in.

The amount of traffic in the system determines when to roll on the Prey Encounter table.

Roll D66, applying DMs as follows:

Backwater System: DM-1 to first dice only
Dangerous World: DM-1 to second dice only
High-Traffic System: DM+1 to first dice only
Secure World: DM+1 to second dice only
Capital or other Key System: DM+2 to first dice only
Naval Base: DM+2 to second dice only

A **backwater system** is one with a Class X or E starport that is off the Imperium-Hierate trade route.

A **high-traffic system** is one with a Class A or B starport and with at least one of the following Trade Codes: High Technology, High Population, Industrial, Agricultural, Rich, or a system on the Imperium-Aslan trade route.

A **capital** or other **key system** is a subsector capital, like Pax Rulin.

A **dangerous world** has an Amber or Red Travel code, a Law Level of 3 or less, or is otherwise unable to patrol its space.

A **secure world** has a Law Level of 7 or more and has the technology to protect Travellers, or has a naval base present with six parsecs.

A **naval base** in the system offers the best possible protection for Travellers.

PREY ENCOUNTER

00	Traveller	40	Small Freighter
01	Traveller	41	Traveller
02	No encounter	42	Convoy
03	No encounter	43	Heavy Freighter
04	Small Freighter	44	No encounter
05	No encounter	45	No encounter
06	No encounter	46	Liner
07	No encounter	47	System Defence Boat
08	Naval Patrol	48	1-3: No encounter; 4-6 Naval Patrol
10	Traveller	50	Traveller
11	No encounter	51	Convoy
12	No encounter	52	Small Freighter
13	No encounter	53	Medium Freighter
14	Small Freighter	54	No encounter
15	No encounter	55	Heavy Freighter
16	No encounter	56	Liner
17	Medium Freighter	57	System Defence Boat
18	1-3: No encounter; 4-6: Naval Patrol	58	1-2: No encounter; 3-6 Naval Patrol
20	Traveller	60	Traveller
21	No encounter	61	Convoy
22	No encounter	62	Small Freighter
23	Small Freighter	63	Medium Freighter
24	Medium Freighter	64	Liner
25	No encounter	65	Convoy
26	Unusual Vessel	66	Rich Freighter
27	System Defence Boat	67	System Defence Boat
28	1-3: No encounter; 4-6 Naval Patrol	68	Naval Patrol
30	Traveller	70	Traveller
31	Small Freighter	71	Small Freighter
32	Convoy	72	Medium Freighter
33	Unusual Vessel	73	Convoy
34	Medium Freighter	74	Unusual Vessel
35	No encounter	75	Liner
36	No encounter	76	Rich Freighter
37	Rich Freighter	77	System Defence Boat
38	1-3: No encounter; 4-6 Naval Patrol	78	Naval Patrol

Traveller: A vessel other than a cargo ship, such as a scout vessel, small military ship, fast courier or even another pirate. Travellers are poor targets for pirates, as they are unlikely to carry valuable cargoes. They can be looted for parts.

Small Freighter: A far trader, free trader or other 100-300 ton trade vessel. Such vessels are ideal prey for most pirates, as they can quickly be looted and are unlikely to have significant defences.

Medium Freighter: A trader of 400-1,000 tons. Still a good target for pirates, although sorting through the cavernous cargo bay for the choicest items may take more time than the pirate can afford.

Heavy Freighter: This is a freighter of 1,000 tons or more. Heavy freighters of this kind travel with escort vessels or carry their own fighters or defensive weapons, and may be more than the average pirate can handle.

Rich Freighter: Roll 1D to determine the sort of freighter encountered. 1-3: Small Freighter, 4-5: Medium Freighter, 6: Heavy Freighter. This freighter is carrying an especially valuable cargo; when rolling for a random cargo, roll twice and take the most valuable result.

Liner: This is a passenger vessel, colony ship, troop transport or tourist vessel. Such ships may have many valuable items carried by the passengers, but the pirates will be outnumbered if they try to storm on board.

Unusual Vessel: A noble's yacht, science vessel, X-boat, mercenary transport, survey ship or other rare type of ship. The vessel may be utterly useless to the pirate or a rich prize, depending on what is on board. It could even be a rival pirate.

System Defence Boat: Roll 1D. On a 1-5, this is a classic SDB of some sort – a heavily armed, fast-moving spaceship without a jump drive. On a 6, it is a q-ship, a small freighter that has been refitted with concealed weapons as a honey trap for pirates.

Convoy: A convoy consists of 2-12 ships, split between Heavy, Medium and Rich Freighters and armed escorts.

Naval Patrol: The pirate has run into a heavily armed navy ship, ranging from a small escort ship or pirate hunter to a full-size warship.

MORALE

Enemy ships have a Morale score, just like pirates. The MOR for a merchant starts at 1D+3; for an armed ship, it starts at 1D+6; and for a naval ship like an escort, at 1D+8. Morale is reduced by -1 for every critical hit, and by -1D for critical hits of Severity 4+. A ship with damaged MOR may be willing to sacrifice a portion of her cargo in exchange for the promise of safe passage – see Demanding Surrender on page 17.

If MOR reaches 0, then the victim either jumps out (if possible) or else surrenders.

ENCOUNTER DISTANCE & TIMING

The 'encounter window' for a pirate attack is a slim one. It takes a ship only a few hours to lift off from a spaceport and pass through the hundred-diameter jump point, or to travel from where it entered the system to the safety of the atmosphere. Within that window, the pirate has to come within range of the target, disable it or force its surrender, match velocity, dock, loot the cargo and then escape.

The initial encounter distance is set by the referee; as a rule of thumb, roll 3D and multiply it by the diameter of the mainworld (or 1,000km for Size 0 worlds). An arriving ship will arrive somewhere outside the hundred-diameter jump limit, so the values in the Jump Limit Transit table are the minimum travel times for an arriving ship.

Roll 1D or choose the prey's direction of travel. On a 1-3, it is heading towards the planet to land; on a 4-5, it is heading to the jump diameter limit. On a 6, it is stationary or heading towards some other destination, such as a moon, another planet or another vessel.

The Jump Limit Transit table describes how long it takes a vessel to reach either the surface or hundred-diameter jump limit, depending on its Thrust and the Size of the planet. Note that it is much quicker to leave a planet and travel at full thrust to the jump limit than it is to fly to the surface, as the vessel must do a turnover at the half-way point (or use atmospheric braking; either way, it must reach zero velocity at the surface or there will be an unfortunate interaction with the ground, termed a 'crash').

If the ship is located elsewhere in the system, then it can jump out immediately when threatened, assuming it has fuel.

Planet Size	Thrust 1		Thrust 2		Thrust 3		Thrust 4		Thrust 5		Thrust 6	
	Up	Down	Up	Down	Up	Down	Up	Down	Up	Down	Up	Down
0 (80,000 km)	1hr	1.5hrs	45mins	1.2hrs	40mins	1hr	33mins	45mins	30mins	42mins	27mins	38mins
1 (160,000 km)	1.5hrs	2 hrs	1.2hrs	1.5hrs	1hr	1.2hrs	45mins	1.1hrs	42mins	1hr	38mins	0.9hrs
2 (320,000 km)	2hrs	3 hrs	1.5hrs	2.25hrs	1.2hrs	2hrs	1.1hrs	1.5hrs	1hr	1.5hrs	0.9hrs	1.2hrs
3 (480,000 km)	3hrs	4 hrs	2hrs	2.75hrs	1.5hrs	2.2hrs	1.3hrs	2hrs	1.2hrs	1.75hrs	1.1hrs	1.5hrs
4 (640,000 km)	3 hrs	4.3 hrs	2.25hrs	3hrs	1.9hrs	2.5hrs	1.5hrs	2.25hrs	1.5hrs	2hrs	1.2hrs	1.9hrs
5 (800,000 km)	3.5hrs	5 hrs	2.5hrs	3.5hrs	2hrs	3hrs	1.75hrs	2.5hrs	1.6hrs	2.2hrs	1.5hrs	2hrs
6 (960,000 km)	4hrs	5.5hrs	2.75hrs	4hrs	2.25hrs	3.2hrs	2hrs	2.75hrs	1.75hrs	2.5hrs	1.5hrs	2.25hrs
7 (1,120,000 km)	4.2hrs	6hrs	3hrs	4.2hrs	2.4hrs	3.5hrs	2.1hrs	3hrs	1.9hrs	2.6hrs	1.75hrs	2.5hrs
8 (1,280,000 km)	4.5hrs	6.3hrs	3.2hrs	4.5hrs	2.6hrs	3.7hrs	2.25hrs	3.1hrs	2hrs	2.9hrs	1.9hrs	2.4hrs
9 (1,440,000 km)	4.75hrs	6.75hrs	3.3hrs	4.75hrs	2.75hrs	3.9hrs	2.3hrs	3.3hrs	2.1hrs	3hrs	2hrs	2.75hrs
A (1,600,000 km)	5hrs	7hrs	3.5hrs	5hrs	3hrs	4.1hrs	2.5hrs	3.5hrs	2.25hrs	3.1hrs	2hrs	3hrs

PIRATE ATTACKS

Once the pirate has located a suitable target, the following steps must be taken:

- Intercept the target
- Attack the target/Prevent the target's escape
- (Optionally) Board the target
- Loot the target
- Escape!

INTERCEPT THE TARGET

The pirate faces a difficult task – they must not only get within range of the target, but must also match velocity with it so boarding can be attempted. The target may attempt to avoid the pirate, but any evasive manoeuvres will increase the amount of time it takes to reach the target's destination. Opposed Pilot checks are used when the range drops to Short or less, as the target jinks and dodges to avoid the approaching pirate vessel.

In general, if the pirate has a higher Thrust value than the target, and is within 100,000 kilometres, then escape is very difficult indeed.

As soon as the pirate opens fire, a clock starts ticking. The pirate has a limited amount to breach the target and loot before the authorities arrive (see Pirate Hunters on page 21). The referee should track how long the attack takes, to determine how long the pirates have to loot their prize.

The following skill checks are used for this part of the attack.

Locating a Target: Average (8+) Electronics (sensors) check (1D minutes, INT)
Estimating an Approximate Value of a Prize: Difficult (10+) Broker check (1D seconds, INT)
Plotting an Intercept Course: Average (8+) Pilot check (1D x 10 seconds, EDU)

ATTACK THE TARGET

Pirates do not want to destroy their target; they want to cripple it. Missile and torpedo attacks may be used to 'soften up' a target, but as soon as the target's hull is breached, the pirate runs the risk of destroying the cargo he seeks. Most pirates will challenge the target as soon as the first shot is fired, demanding that the prey surrender, heave to and prepare to be boarded.

The ideal results for a pirate are critical hits to the manoeuvre drive (reducing the target's Thrust and making interception much easier) or fuel (dumping a portion of the target's fuel into space and possibly preventing it from jumping away).

Demanding Surrender: To force a ship to surrender, make an Average (8+) Electronics (comms) check (1D x 10 seconds, SOC), subtracting the target's current MOR as a negative DM. Surrenders are rarely unconditional; normally, the merchant demands a promise of safe passage for ship and crew in exchange for handing over part of the cargo. Many merchants keep a few tons of 'sacrificial' cargo on board to keep pirates at bay.

The following skill checks are used for this part of the attack.

Demanding a Surrender: Average (8+) Electronics (comms) check (1D x 10 seconds, SOC)
Docking with a Crippled Target: Routine (6+) Pilot check (1D minutes, DEX)

CALLED SHOTS

Ships at a range of Short or less may attempt to make called shots with direct-fire weapons (not missiles or torpedoes). The attacker nominates the location he wishes to target, and then makes an attack roll with DM-2. If the attack is successful and scores a critical hit, the attacker may choose which location is hit.

BOARD THE TARGET

To board the target, the pirate vessel must either dock with it or send boarding troops across using thruster packs, grav belts, grapple lines or other transport methods (psionic teleportation can be ideal for piracy). Once the boarders have reached the target, they need to force open an airlock. Most pirates warn the target before breaching the hull, demanding that the victims open up or lose atmospheric containment. All but the bravest of targets will just let the pirates in at this point.

If the victim intends to fight back, then the situation becomes more complicated. If the defenders are not wearing vacc suits, then just breaching the airlock removes the problem, but no-one is stupid enough to resist boarders without first putting on vacc suits (or closing internal doors, ensuring that a breach at the main airlock or cargo hold will not vent the air from the bridge and crew quarters). Assuming both sides are ready for fighting in vacuum, then the pirates must battle their way onto the other ship and eliminate any resistance. The weapons of choice in a boarding action are cutlasses, snub pistols and other short-ranged zero-g weapons.

Ideally, the pirate vessel docks with the target, to allow cargo and other loot to be transferred quickly.

The following skill checks are used for this part of the attack.

Setting a Breaching Charge: Average (8+) Explosives check (1D minutes, EDU)
Moving in Zero-g: Average (8+) DEX check (1D seconds)
Finding the Cargo Hold: Average (8+) Recon check (1D minutes, INT)

LOOT THE TARGET

If the pirate has secured its prize, the crew can begin looting. Successful pirates have this part of the operation down to a fine art, hunting down the most valuable items first and dispatching specialised teams to recover specific targets. Security systems must be bypassed or destroyed; the pick of the cargo must be transferred into the pirate vessel; subcraft and other vehicles are cut free and stolen. Looting is as dangerous as any part of the attack – if the pirate captain does not leave promptly, he will be caught by the authorities. Many pirates have been left behind on a crippled merchant ship when their captain abandons them rather than stand and fight. A well-trained pirate crew will leave behind what they cannot safely steal.

The following skill checks are used for this part of the attack.

Opening a Ship's Locker: Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (computers) check (1D x 10 minutes, EDU)
Finding the Right Cargo: Average (8+) Recon check (1D minutes, INT)
Moving a Cargo Container Manually: Very Difficult (12+) STR check (1D minutes)

ESCAPE!

The final challenge for the pirate is to escape without being captured. Once a pirate has taken its prize, it still needs to make it back to the hundred-diameter jump limit to escape. One common mistake made by inexperienced raiders is to chase a target too far into a planet's jump shadow, so they cannot then safely jump out (jumping within the hundred-diameter limit incurs DM-4 to the check).

PREY QUIRKS

Every ship hides surprises; roll on the Prey Quirks and Complications tables to spice up any encounter with a merchant ship.

11	**Coward:** Surrenders easily. Reduce starting MOR by 1D.	41	**Heavily Armed:** The merchant ship is ready for a fight. Any hardpoints are equipped with turrets filled with lasers or missile racks.
12	**Deceitful:** Pretends to surrender in order to lure the pirates into docking, then fights back at Short range.	42	**Berserker:** One of the merchant crew is a trained marine equipped with battle dress or boarding vacc suit, and a heavy weapon.
13	**Smuggler:** The really valuable cargo is hidden in a secret compartment	43	**Self Destruct:** The captain would rather die than lose his ship. Unless the pirates can stop him, he'll scuttle his ship rather than lose his cargo.
14	**Eccentric:** The captain is insane, drunk or otherwise eccentric.	44	**Mission of Mercy:** The ship is carrying vitally needed supplies, like medicine or food, to a troubled colony.
15	**No Surrender:** The crew will not surrender under any circumstances. Ignore MOR.	45	**Die Hard:** One of the merchant's crew hides when the ship is boarded, and sneaks onto the Travellers' ship to sabotage them.
16	**Duel of Honour:** The captain challenges one of the pirates to a rapier duel in vacc suits on the exterior hull of his ship.	46	**Psionic Defender:** One of the crew of the merchant ship is a psion.
21	**Noble:** There's a noble on board. If ransomed, she's worth considerably more than normal.	51	**Unlikely Cargo:** The merchant ship is carrying an unexpected cargo – what are they doing out here?
22	**Alien:** There's an exotic alien like a Hiver on board.	52	**Perishable Cargo:** The merchant's cargo is valuable, but only if sold within the month.
23	**Family:** The captain's family travel on board the ship.	53	**Dangerous Cargo:** The merchant's cargo is dangerous to have on board.
24	**Diplomat:** There is an Imperial or Aslan diplomat on board, carrying a secret message	54	**Living Cargo:** The cargo is alive – animals, insects, or even slaves.
25	**Stowaway:** Someone's hidden inside a cargo container that the pirates just stole.	55	**Hot Cargo:** The cargo was stolen – and the real owner wants it back.
26	**Prisoner:** There's a criminal – perhaps a captured pirate – in the ship's brig.	56	**Alien Cargo:** The merchant is carrying something from a very distant part of space, or even an Ancient relic.
31	**Plague Ship:** The crew are infected with a potentially fatal disease.	61	**Traitor:** One of the merchant's crew is willing to betray his shipmates for a large payoff.
32	**Dying Ship:** The ship misjumped and is running low on food, oxygen or fuel.	62	**Infestation:** There's something alive on board ship.
33	**Damaged Ship:** The ship has sustained 1D critical hits, each of Severity D3 already.	63	**Ghost Ship:** This ship has been drifting dead for centuries. The Travellers were attacked by automated weapons.
34	**Treasure Map:** While looting the ship, the Travellers find a map pointing to a hidden supply cache, mineral deposit or other valuable treasure.	64	**Strange Curio:** There's a relic or other strange item in the captain's cabin.
35	**Important Document:** The ship's safe contains the deeds to a property, a letter of marque, a corporate contract or some other valuable document.	65	**It's a Trap:** This 'merchant' is actually a disguised q-ship or pirate hunter.
36	**Message Pod:** The ship carries a 5-dton data drum containing mail. Decoding this data may reveal useful information.	66	**Drinaxian on Board:** One of the characters from *The Trojan Reach* page 24 is on board... what are they doing here?

PREY COMPLICATIONS

11	Solar Flares: The system's primary sun spits out huge flares and high levels of radiation. All ships take 3D x 100 rads per hour.	41	Rapid Reaction: The security forces here respond very quickly – apply DM+4 to the response time roll.
12	Debris Field: The encounter takes place in a debris field. Pilot checks are needed to avoid floating obstacles; on the bright side, there may be some salvage here.	42	Corrupt Cops: The security forces can be bribed to ignore the attack.
13	Ice Field: The planet's surrounded by a ring of ice particles, and the quarry takes refuge there. Direct-fire weapons are limited to Short range.	43	Nearby Asteroid: There's an asteroid close to the battle; the merchant can fly to the refuge and hide behind it. The asteroid might even be inhabited.
14	Comms Jamming: Something in the system blocks communications. The victim can't call for help.	44	Sensor Jamming: Conditions in the system block sensors.
15	Behind The Moon: There's a nearby moon. What's lurking there? Another pirate? An interceptor? An Aslan spy?	45	Imperial Patrol: There's an Imperial or Aslan patrol in the system, hunting for pirates. They're far enough away that the Travellers might be able to complete the attack before the first fighters arrive...
16	Incoming Escort: The merchant has an escort, but they haven't jumped in yet. They'll be here any minute.	46	Distress Call: The Travellers detect a distress call from a stricken ship. Do they call off their attack?
21	Rival Pirate: There's another pirate after the same prize	51	High Guard: There's an unexpected ship refuelling at the system's gas giant (or at another source of hydrogen, like a lake). Why are they avoiding the starport?
22	Slow Leak: The Travellers' fuel tank has a slow leak; they're losing 1D tons of fuel per round.	52	Spy in the System: A spy in the system contacts the Travellers by radio, offering them useful information about traffic.
23	Out of Control: The quarry loses control of its attitude thrusters and starts spinning wildly. It's now easy to catch but very hard to dock with.	53	Screamer: The merchant ship frantically warns everyone who'll listen about the pirates – not just in this system, but in every other system the merchant visits
24	Cargo Spilled: In a panic, the merchant jettisons most of its cargo, sending an expanding flock of canisters into space.	54	Incoming!: The starport below launches ground-to-space missiles. The first missile hits in 1D+10 rounds...
25	Collision Warning! Both ships nearly collide with a small asteroid or other piece of space debris.	55	Tricky Calculation: The complex arrangement of moons and planets in this system make jump calculations harder. Apply DM-4 to any Astrogation checks.
26	Misjump: The first ship to jump out misjumps when they flee	56	Pull Up!: The merchant doesn't slow down as it approaches the planet – instead, they plan to use aerobraking to slow their dissent.
31	Observer: There's another ship nearby. They steer clear of the dogfight, but they're watching...	61	The Black Signal: The pirates pick up the fabled 'black signal' on the ship; a pattern of radiation burned into the hull, denoting that this ship is an enemy of the pirates of Theev.
32	Bad Jump: This was a bad jump – the pirates have arrived well outside the travelled parts of the system.	62	Familiar Ship: The Travellers have encountered this merchant ship before...
33	Unfortunate Timing: Another ship jumps right into the middle of the battle.	63	Aslan Raiders: Several Aslan raiders led by an ambitious ihatei warlord arrive in the system.
34	Crew Dissent: One of the crew on board the Travellers' ship is having problems that affect the battle. Perhaps they object to this particular target, are drunk, or are deliberately sabotaging the attack.	64	Under The Shield of the Sunburst: An Imperial patrol jumps in; they're not pirate hunting, they're here to enforce the Third Imperium's will on the planetary government.
35	System Failure: A key system fails on board the pirate ship. Roll for a random critical hit with a Severity of D3.	65	Didn't Expect To Find You Here: A Contact (or Ally, or Enemy) of a Traveller is on board the merchant.
36	Escape Pods: The merchant's crew flee their ship in escape pods and small craft. They could be carrying treasure on board those pods – but the pirates have time to only chase down one of them...	66	Anomaly: The Travellers run into something unusual, like a wrecked ship or a spatial anomaly.

PIRATE HUNTERS

Any system with sufficient resources and trade will maintain a fleet of system defence boats (SDBs) and customs vessels. Even on technologically primitive worlds, the government will either hire private contractors or request Imperial aid. These SDBs patrol the space around the mainworld, as well as other key locations in the system such as gas giants or asteroid belts. While the main purpose of an SDB fleet is to protect against invasion, they hone their skills hunting pirates.

Pirate hunting can also be an important duty for the Imperial navy and subsector navies. The Imperial navy only bothers with pirate hunting when training new crews, or when a nest of pirates proves especially troublesome. Many years can go by before the navy bothers to act; but when they do, they use overwhelming force. Imperial navy ships are deployed to besiege and destroy pirate bases.

Subsector navies are much more active when it comes to pirate hunting, and it is one of their primary roles. Subsector navies use much smaller and more agile warships, making them ideal for patrols and anti-pirate operations. Pirates often operate across subsector borders to avoid subsector fleets – the dead hand of bureaucracy is a powerful weapon in the stratified Imperium, and one duke may be unwilling to allow a neighbour's ships to enter his space.

Any of these pirate hunters may respond to a distress call from a merchant ship. Roll on the Response table when the pirate attack begins.

Response

2D	Result
5-	No response; roll again in one hour
6-7	A vessel launches from the starport to investigate
8-9	A vessel launches from the starport or from the hundred-diameter jump limit, whichever is closer
10	A vessel in orbit responds; response time is 1D+1 hours
11	A vessel in orbit responds; response time is 1D hours
12	A vessel in orbit responds; response time is 1D x 10 minutes
13+	A vessel in orbit responds, response time is 1D x 5 minutes

Apply the following modifiers.

Backwater System: DM-1
Dangerous World: DM-1
High-Traffic System: DM+1
Secure World: DM+1
Capital or other key System: DM+2
Naval Base: DM+2

CUSTOMS SHIPS:

Customs ships are small, fast-moving lightly armed vessels, designed to intercept smugglers and patrol the spaceways. A customs ship is not designed to get into a shooting match with another vessel, although most could inflict significant damage on a small pirate. Customs vessels are normally the first to respond to a pirate attack, although they will call in support from SDBs if necessary.

SYSTEM DEFENCE BOATS

System Defence Boats vary wildly in size. The largest SDBs are hollowed-out asteroids bigger than any capital ship; these supermonitors are designed to fight off invading fleets, and could swat every pirate in the subsector with a single broadside. The SDBs normally encountered by pirates are much smaller escorts. SDBs are extremely dangerous, as they are faster and better-armed than any pirate ship. They are incapable of jump travel, though, and their crew may not be as skilled as a hardened pirate band, so a clever pirate can avoid or escape a SDB.

Q-SHIPS

Q-ships are merchant vessels with concealed weapons, used as lures for pirates and commerce raiders. Most subsector navies have a few old q-ships in storage that are hauled out when pirate activity becomes a problem. The q-ship then 'conveniently' jumps into dangerous systems and offers itself as a tempting target for pirates. When the attack begins, the q-ship responds by revealing its weapons and launching fighters.

Some worlds use a variant on the q-ship concept, where they send freighters loaded with booby-trapped cargo into dangerous space. When the pirates steal the cargo, the booby trap is activated. High-explosive charges are the most common form of booby trap, but other q-ships have concealed armoured marines, lethal toxins or even nuclear mines.

NAVAL VESSELS

Small naval vessels like the Gazelle-class close escort are ideal pirate hunters. These vessels can outgun or outrun most pirate ships, and unlike an SDB they have skilled crews and can chase corsairs from one system to another. Naval vessels may also carry high-acceleration fighters, which can chase down pirate vessels in the same way pirates chase down prey.

Small naval vessels are the bane of piracy. The only chance for the pirate is to flee to a less well-patrolled subsector and start again. Actually destroying the naval vessel is the worst possible course of action, as it ensures the pirate will be hunted down and exterminated by the navy. At least surrendering means the pirate may survive.

CAPITAL SHIPS

Massive capital warships are much too large and expensive to be 'wasted' on pirate hunting. Nonetheless, pirates do sometimes encounter capital ships. There are two likely scenarios – either the navy has detected a pirate base, and wish to pound it into free-floating dust, or some influential noble or corporation has made a fuss and the navy wishes to show how seriously it takes the pirate situation. Both scenarios involve a great deal of overkill.

BOUNTY HUNTERS

If all the above pirate hunters are unable to deal with a particularly troublesome corsair, then the time-honoured system of bounties can produce results. Putting a price on a pirate's head (or hull) means that every adventurer and bounty hunter in the subsector will be looking for him. Usually, this price ends up getting collected by another pirate.

PIRATE LOOT

Once a target has been boarded, the looting can begin. Each type of loot takes time to recover from the target ship, so pirates must choose what they take carefully. The times listed on the Looting table all assume a single pirate crewman assigned to the task; assigning more crew will reduce the time required, but cannot reduce the time below the minimum time listed.

Pirate Looting Times

Item	Value	Average Time Required	Skills Needed
Supplies	-	1D x 10 minutes	None
Cargo	Varies (approx. Cr50000/ton)		
By hand		1D minutes per ton	Athletics (dexterity)
By robot		D3 minutes per ton	None
By grappling arm		1 minute per ton	Electronics (remote ops)
Treasure			
Ship's Safe	Cr20000/100 tons	1D Hours	Recon
Personal treasure	Cr10000 per high passenger Cr5000 per medium passenger Cr1000 per low passenger	1D minutes per passenger	None
Equipment	Cr1000 per crew member	1D minutes per crewman	None
Prisoners	Varies (if ransomed)	1D minutes per passenger	Melee
Vehicles	Varies (with type)	1D x 10 minutes per vehicle	Electronics (computers), Pilot
What's Not Nailed Down	Cr50000/100 tons	1D hours per 100 tons	Athletics (dexterity), Mechanic
Prize Ship	Varies	Varies	Varies

SUPPLIES

This covers spare parts, ship components, electronics, food, oxygen and other immediately useful items. Pirates have to go for months without docking at a fully equipped starport, so they cannot resupply and maintain their ships in the usual fashion. Cannibalising supplies allows a pirate to keep flying without resupply. Looting supplies in this fashion takes 1D x 10 minutes.

CARGO

The merchant's cargo can be the richest prize on board, but handling a large number of cargo containers hastily can be difficult.

On average, a freighter will have 1D x 10 + 40% of its cargo bay filled. Half the cargo will be of a single type, chosen from either the cargoes available at the world the freighter just left, from those that sell well at the destination world, from the list of goods commonly traded between the Hierate and the Imperium (as shown on the Imperium/Hierate table), or by picking one of the six basic cargo types. The rest of the cargo should be rolled for randomly (using the Trade Goods table within the Traveller Core Rulebook, page 212-213) in smaller blocks of 20 tons each.

The number of cargo containers that can be moved simultaneously depends on the size of the cargo bay doors, which varies from ship to ship. As a rule of thumb, assume that the hatch is one container wide for every fifty tons of cargo at minimum.

If the pirate has no cargo handling equipment, then each cargo container must be handled individually.

Cargo may or may not need to be fenced, depending on how identifiable it is. Fifty tons of wood or ore can be sold anywhere; fifty tons of brand new TL15 robots are covered in tracking numbers and codes, and have to be sold through a fence.

2D	Imperium - Hierate	Hierate - Imperium
2	Advanced Weapons	Radioactives
3	Live Animals	Uncommon Ore
4	Luxury Goods	Luxury Goods
5	Luxury Consumables	Luxury Consumables
6	Spices	Textiles
7	Basic Manufactured Goods	Basic Raw Materials
8	Biochemicals	Polymers
9	Pharmaceuticals	Crystals & Gems
10	Advanced Manufactured Goods	Uncommon Raw Materials
11	Advanced Machine Parts	Precious Metals
12	Illegal Luxuries	Illegal Weapons

TREASURE

This covers cash, gemstones, precious metals, high-value trade goods, software, exotic or alien equipment, art and other small, valuable items. Such treasure will normally be held inside a hidden safe on board. Finding this cache requires a Difficult (10+) Recon check (1D hours, INT) per hundred tons of ship. The value of the treasure is generally equal to Cr20000cr per 100 tons of ship.

Passengers on board ship may also have treasure. As an average, assume Cr10000 for High passengers, Cr5000 for mid passengers, and Cr1000 for low passengers. Treasure is in cash or easily sellable items, and does not need to be fenced. Looting this treasure takes 1D minutes per passenger, unless the treasure is hidden in the ship's safe.

EQUIPMENT

Equipment includes items such as armour, weapons, computers and other personal gear that can be sold. Assume Cr1000 per crew member. This equipment must be fenced, so the pirate may only get a fraction of the 'real' value. Looting equipment takes 1D minutes per crew member.

VEHICLES

Ship's vehicles like boats, launches and shuttles are extremely valuable to pirates. A 20-ton launch is worth MCr5, the equivalent of cargo worth Cr250000/ton! While these vehicles must be fenced, they are still choice loot if they can be stolen.

If the pirate's cargo bay is large enough to hold the stolen vehicle, then the pirates need only fly it across to their ship. If the pirates have no suitable place to stow a vehicle, they may try docking it to an external airlock, although this is risky. Any large object attached to the hull can cause problems when jumping (assume DM-2 to the jump check for every ten tons of stolen vehicle if proper mounting is not available).

Overriding security systems on a vehicle requires a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check (1D x 10 minutes, INT) (+0). Flying the ship across requires an Average (8+) Pilot check (1D minutes, DEX).

PRISONERS

Some pirates take prisoners for later ransom. Ransoming is a difficult process, and should be handled as an adventure in its own right. Prisoners are usually thrown into low berths for 'storage'. Forcing an unwilling prisoner onto a pirate vessel requires a Melee check and takes 1D minutes (or, better yet, use a stunner).

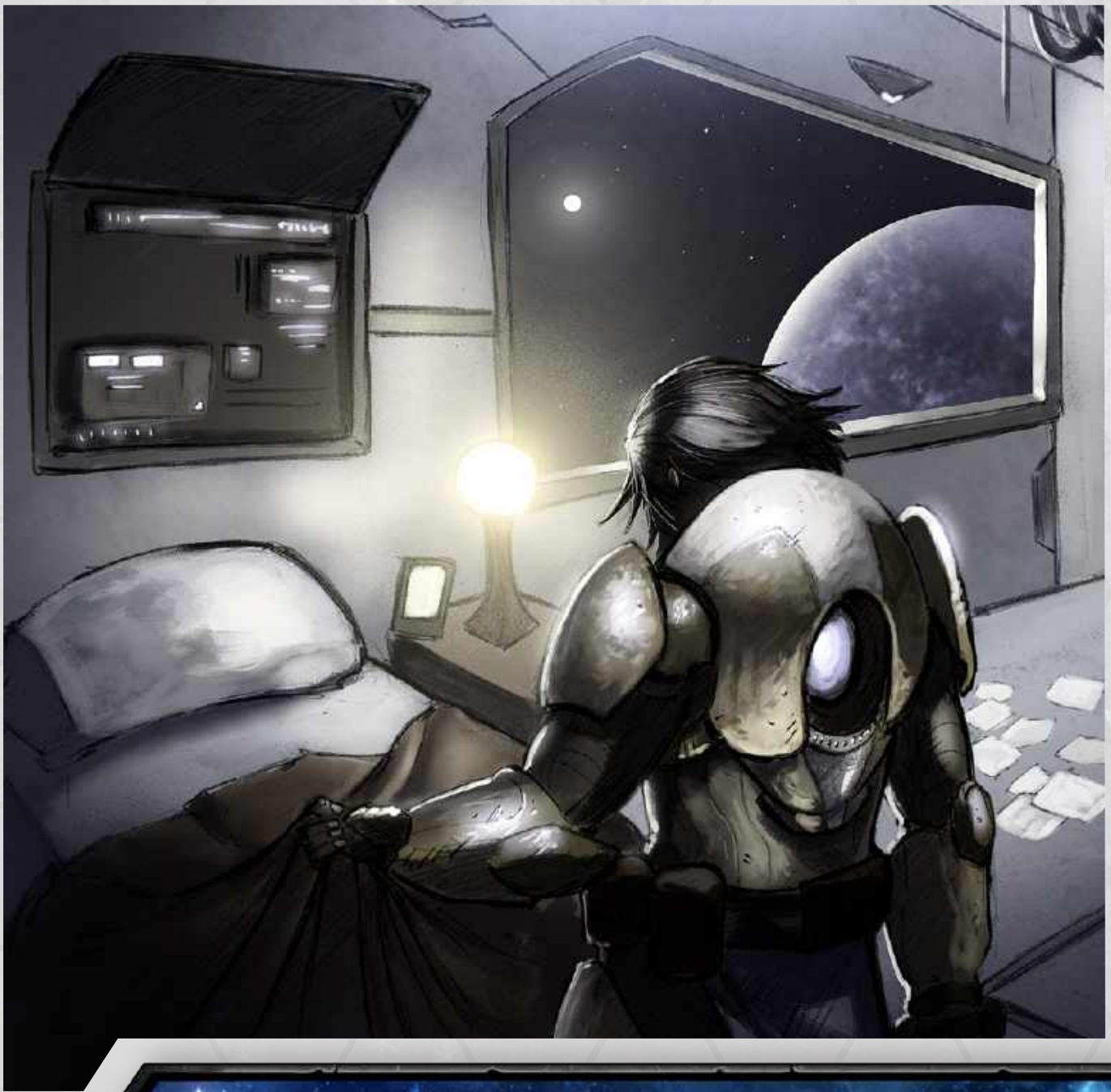
WHAT'S NOT NAILED DOWN

It is possible, albeit time-consuming, to strip every valuable item from a captured ship; everything from computer cabling and hydrogen fuel to jump drive components and floor tiles can be stolen. Fully stripping a ship of all easily transportable items takes 1D x 10 hours per 100 tons of ship. Every hundred tons of stripped ship produces 10 tons of spare parts worth Cr5000 each (or Cr50000/100 tons).

PRIZE SHIPS

To escape with a captured ship, the pirates need to have enough crew to fly both ships. Alternatively, a determined and charismatic pirate might be able to convince some of the crew of a merchant ship to switch sides and turn pirate.

Selling a stolen ship is virtually impossible – not only is a stolen ship a 'hot' property, thanks to IFF beacons and serial numbers wowven into the hull's molecular structure, but few brokers have the ready cash to buy a ship. Some pirates who steal a ship keep it and use it as a cargo store or even as a legitimate merchant; others add it to their pirate fleet. Another option is to donate the stolen ship to a friendly system to curry favour with the government there.



C H A P T E R - F O U R

PIRATES OF DRINAX: HONOUR AMONG THIEVES

'This is the free trader Beowulf, calling anyone... Mayday, mayday, we are under attack...'

The raiders didn't bother stopping to loot the free trader. They had bigger prey in mind. Three ships shot past the crippled Beowulf, flipping over as they did so. Their grav-plates bloomed with energy, slowing their headlong flight towards the looming planet ahead. As the ghostly tendrils of the outer atmosphere began to heat their hulls, two of the ships turned again to dive into the planet's gravity well. The third ship aerobraked and moved itself to an overwatch orbit, its turret-mounted weapons ready to defend its cronies as they landed to loot the planet below.

'Mayday... losing cabin pressure... calling anyone... please help.'

There was no answer. The radio bands were empty except for the coded screeches of the pirates, and the endless hiss of the void.

And soon, there was only the void.

This adventure takes place in the Tliowaha and Sindal subsectors of the Trojan Reaches. The year is assumed to be 1105. The assumed starting point is Drinax, but the Travellers can begin the adventure in any system where rumours can reach them.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Two worlds near Drinax – Torpol and Clarke were recently attacked by raiders. While both these planets are on the Florian Trade route, and so see a lot of piracy, these attacks were not piratical attacks on shipping. They were raids on the planets themselves. The governments of both worlds are furious, and are offering rewards for information leading to the capture of these raiders.

Both Torpol and Clarke were once part of the Kingdom of Drinax, and King Oleg's daughter Rao believes that if Drinaxian heroes were to bring these raiders to justice, it would help move both worlds closer to an alliance with their old rulers. The Travellers are contacted by agents of Drinax and sent to visit Torpol and Clarke.

The Travellers find that some of the ships involved in the attack could only make Jump-2, limiting the number of systems they could have reached to only a handful. The Travellers quickly determine that the raiders fled to Borite.

Searching that system, the Travellers discover that one of the raiders was abandoned by his former compatriots and exiled to a barely-habitable moon. After rescuing the raider, a Vargr called Krrsh, he reveals who the raiders were, and guides the Travellers to the pirate world of Theev. The raiders were under the command of an upstart named Ferrik Redthan, who is trying to form an alliance with one of the pirate gangs of Theev.

On Theev, the Travellers must negotiate a truce or alliance with the gangs if they are to capture Ferrik. Ferrik's right-hand woman, Miria Silver, is negotiating on his behalf on Theev, and through her the Travellers need to engineer a situation where they can ambush Ferrik's ship and capture him – dead or alive...

1. THE TOUCH OF THE KING

The Travellers are contacted by Princess Rao in person if they are on Drinax; otherwise, she sends them a holographic message via Sal Dancet, who tracks the Travellers down wherever they are. Her message is brief and to the point if delivered by holo, but if the princess speaks to the Travellers directly, she is more conspiratorial and presents the scheme as a clever way to manipulate the politics of the subsector instead of an order from the king.

Rao explains that two nearby worlds, Torpol and Clarke, were both hit by the same raiding party. The raiders initially landed on Clarke, then headed to Torpol. They then jumped out and have not been seen since. Both governments want to punish the raiders, and have put a price on their heads.

The provost merchant-princes of Torpol are moderately friendly towards Drinax; the insular Psychopomps of Clarke are much less trusting, but have lately made overtures towards King Oleb's court. Rao believes that if the Travellers capture the pirates and turn them over in the name of King Oleb, it would tip the balance towards Drinax. She urges the Travellers to head to Clarke and Torpol with all speed.

RUMOURS AND SECRETS

Checking with contacts and allies, sleuthing around starport bars with Streetwise and Carouse checks, or simple past experience gets the Travellers some possibly relevant rumours:

- Virtually all the pirates in this region of space are either based at or regularly visit the 'pirate world' of Theev.
- However, getting to Theev is tricky. Those who land there without permission from the Lords of Blacksand City tend to end up dead. To visit Theev safely, you need a pirate's code, and none of the Travellers have such a code.
- Raiding a planet with such a small force is unusual for pirates. Either they were looking for something in particular, or they were trying to make a name for themselves.

THE BOUNTIES

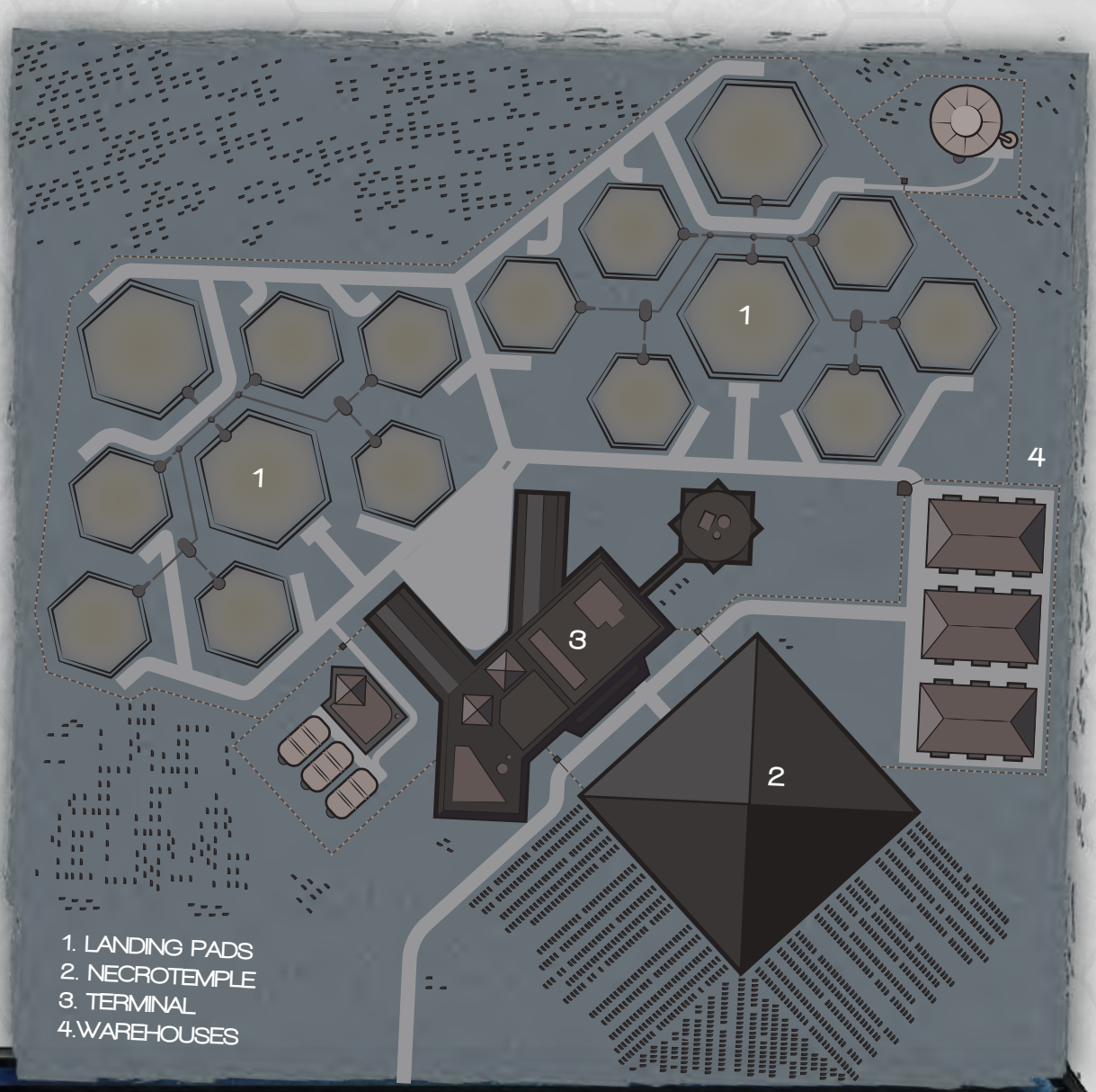
The bounties on the pirates posted by both worlds are slowly filtering out into the wider Reach; there is no Xboat network outside the Imperial subsectors, so news travels only as fast as tramp ships carry it. The Clarke bounty is MCr0.5, while the Torpol bounty is MCr2 for the pirates, dead or alive, although proof must be provided that these are indeed the raiders who attacked both worlds.

2. THE PSYCHOPOMPS OF CLARKE

Clarke (see *The Trojan Reach* page 180) is not a welcoming world. The Travellers approach the starport through a grey rainstorm, and fly over a million-strong cemetery before they reach a landing pad. The political power on this grey world is held by the Psychopomps, the death-worshipping priests. The starport is neutral ground and controlled directly by them. The port is moderately busy, but few ships spend very long here. Most land, refuel and depart again without trading.

Clarke is a stop on the Florian Trade route, but not a popular one. Most ships head for Torpol or the Dustbelt worlds (Oghma, Marduk and so on) as soon as they can, before the mortuary mood of Clarke seeps into their souls.

There is a necrotemple atop the starport, and the Travellers are directed there if they ask about the recent attacks. The necrotemple is a black pyramid, built from thousands of black monolithic slabs. On close examination, the Travellers realise that these black slabs are carbon grave markers and each one contains a corpse. The features of the corpses peer out of one face of the monolith like a bas-relief. The Travellers are surrounded by the dead.



CLARKE SPACEPORT

KEEPER MALOS

The starport administrator is also a priest of the death cult, and he attends to his commercial duties with as much zeal as his religious ones. Malos wears black robes, and on his back is a ceremonial freezer-tank that contains the carbon-foam spray used to preserve the dead. He is never without this pack; the first and foremost role of the Psychopomp is to catch those who would otherwise 'pass into true death'. Malos is cheery and personable as Psychopomps go, although that just means he's slightly less glum and dour when standing next to another priest.

Like the other inhabitants of Clarke, Malos sees offworlds as 'ephemerals', who will die once and be forgotten instead of receiving the carbon-foam blessing of preservation. As such, he tries to get through any conversation with ephemerals as quickly as he can – why bother squandering time on foolish people who have embraced their temporary nature, who will be gone in an eyeblink?

If asked about the raiders, Malos becomes visibly angry. The raiders *killed* many people before they could be preserved – deliberate killing is the highest sin in the Psychopomp faith. Those murdered by the raiders will never be resurrected on the day of healing. He shows the Travellers the location of the attack using his computer terminal.

KEEPER MALOS

AGE			TERMS	
42			6	
STR	5	INT	9	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	8	Admin 3, Art (performer) 2, Electronics (computers) 1, Electronics (comms) 1, Diplomat 2, Medic 2, Persuade 1, Science (theology) 3
END	8	SOC	8	

Playing Malos:

- Make lots of morbid jokes. Talk about the rewards the Travellers will get if they survive, about how death comes to everyone, about how fleeting life is.
- Smile with the saddest face you can manage.
- Clasp your hands and bow your head like a monk.

THE RELIC-QUARRY

The raiders attacked a relic-quarry – an archaeological dig at the edge of the ruins of Hiewad City, where explorers look for high-tech items and materials that survived the bombardment. The explorers will remind the Travellers of the Vespexers of Drinax, who practice a similar form of scavenging.

The traces of the attack are obvious – blast marks on the ground from weapons fire, imprints in the mud where ships landed, and the remains of the warehouse that once contained relics from the ruined city. The warehouse was blasted with a ship-mounted pulse laser.

An Average (8+) Investigate check (1D hours, INT) lets the Travellers reconstruct what happened here. Their findings depend on the Effect of the check. Optionally, the Travellers can use Electronics (sensors) or Recon as part of a Task Chain to improve their chances.

No other clues are available on this benighted system. The trail continues on Torpol.

Effect	Discovery
0	Two pirate ships landed here and attacked. They killed everyone present before blasting the door off the warehouse and looting the place. From the warehouse records, they stole primarily recovered computer parts; these parts could be salvaged by a TL14+ culture. Any Traveller with Broker 2+ or an appropriate Profession skill knows that the Florian Empire buys such scrap for recycling.
1 to 2	The pirate ships consisted of a Type-S Scout and a Far Trader, both refitted with extra weapons. Not exactly a terrifying fighting force – if these are the same ships that attacked Torpol, then there must have been a third ship, one with a lot more firepower.
3 to 4	The Psychopomps of Clarke have already visited the attack site, and there are a half-dozen fresh carbon-foam monoliths preserving the dead who might be saved. Examining these monoliths reveals that one of the victims could be revived with high-tech medical equipment. Reviving the victim requires a Very Difficult (12+) Medic check (1D x 10 minutes, INT); if successful, the victim tells the Travellers that the pirates were led by a young man in what looked like an Imperial naval uniform. She also mentions that the scout ship filled its hold first and departed several hours ahead of the free trader. If the Travellers fail to revive the woman, the Psychopomps are furious – in their eyes, the Travellers have interfered with the sacred monolith. The Travellers are no longer welcome outside Clarke's starport.
5+	The Travellers discover the scavenger's radio system recorded several messages broadcast by the pirates. The messages are encrypted, requiring a Difficult (10+) Electronics (comms) check (1D minutes, INT) to break but if cracked, reveal that the pirate leader was named Ferrik; there was also a woman called Miria commanding a ship that remained in orbit, and a third captain called Krrsh.

3. THE PROVOSTS OF TORPOL

Torpol has both a Highport and a Downport; the Highport is really just for refuelling, so the Travellers are directed to the southern polar port where they are met by the Provost Martial, Haddo Farx. The public sections of the polar port emphasise Torpol's carefully maintained reputation as a watery paradise that is both a safe place to refuel and a wild party planet, with holograms of tropical beaches and sun-kissed seascapes blocking the view of the howling polar blizzards outside. The Travellers are escorted behind into the grey corridors of the private starport to meet with Provost Farx who fills them in on what happened.

THE ATTACK

Torpol's lack of stable land means that many of its industrial facilities are in orbit. The target of the pirate attack was one of these orbital factories, an automated chemical refinery. The factory's onboard cameras transmitted images of the attack just before they were destroyed. The images show two ships approaching from the orbital refuelling dock. A barrage of deadly accurate laser fire severs the refinery's cargo module, and one of the ships swoops in to capture it. The other vessel moves to provide cover, then departs. One of the ships was a Far Trader, the other was a 400-ton Vulture-class salvage hauler.

Falx confirms that both ships refuelled at the orbital dock. They conducted their business electronically, and gave false names, claiming to *Argo 1 and Argo 2.* The ships just bought fuel and departed; none of their crews left the ships.

PROVOST FALX

The Starport Administrator is one of the Provosts, an order of administrators and facilitators who engineer society on Torpol. Falx dresses in bright orange robes and has a tiny golden fez with a scale model of the starport on top of it. He is young and ambitious, and has his eye on the role of Grand High Provost within ten years.

INVESTIGATION

Making a Difficult (10+) Electronics (sensors) check (1D minutes, INT) to enhance the video images gives the Travellers more information about their targets. The 200-ton Far Trader has two double turrets, both equipped with twin pulse lasers. The 400-ton salvage hauler has two single and two double turrets, and is armed with two pulse lasers, two sandcasters, and two missile launchers. The salvage hauler was recently repainted, but using computer analysis the Travellers can discern a logo and a registry beneath the paint – the salvage hauler bears the starburst-and-starship of the Imperial Navy! She is actually the Imperial Navy ship Mercifuge.

Checking the records with an Admin or Electronics (computers) check, or asking around the starport bar using Carouse gets the Travellers some details on the hauler. According to official bulletins, the Mercifuge was part of a flotilla that fled the Imperium under the command of renegade 'Admiral' Darokyn some thirty years ago. The Mercifuge is listed as stolen. According to pirate lore, Darokyn is based on the mysterious world of Theev, in Sindal subsector. Travellers with naval experience or relevant Contacts will have heard of Darokyn (get them to consult the Library Data section of The Trojan Reach).

Accessing communications logs with a Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (comms) check (1D x 10 minutes, INT) reveals that the putative Argo 1 – the Far Trader – made a single radio transmission while docked at the refuelling station. It broadcast an encrypted greeting to another ship, a refitted scout, that was landed at the Torpol Downport. If the Travellers follow this lead, they learn about the Sarcomond incident. Alternatively, if they already know there was a third pirate ship, a scout, at Clarke, then investigating that ship with an Average (8+) Investigate check (1D x 10 minutes, SOC) leads them to the Sarcomond.

The scout ship, the Misery's Company, landed at Torpol a day before the two Argos arrived. There, the scout ship's captain, a Vargr called Krrrsh, sold computer scrap material to another trader called Holmer. The Travellers can easily determine that this scrap was the same material looted from Clarke. The Misery's Company refuelled and departed. Near the jump limit, it was involved in an incident with another ship, the Sarcomond, but no-one other than the Sarcomond's crew know exactly what happened.

PROVOST FALX

AGE			TERMS	
34			4	
STR	6	INT	10	SKILLS
DEX	4	EDU	11	Admin 2, Carouse 2, Electronics (computers) 3, Electronics (comms) 2, Diplomat 2, Streetwise 2, Persuade 3
END	6	SOC	9	

Playing Falx:

- Everyone's your friend. Be friendly and open. Make them like you.
- Finding these pirates could make your career. Drive the investigation; push the Travellers to succeed.
- Always have a drink in hand, and make sure the Travellers have drinks too.

DANIEL VLAW

AGE			TERMS	
50			8	
STR	6	INT	6	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	7	Admin 1, Broker 2, Astrogation 3, Carouse 1, Electronics (comms) 2, Electronics (computers) 1, Engineer (j-drive) 2, Engineer (power) 1, Gunner (turret) 2, Mechanic 4, Melee (unarmed) 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 3, Survival 2, Vacc Suit 2
END	7	SOC	5	
ARMOUR			Vacc Suit (+8)	
WEAPONS			Autopistol (3D-3)	

Playing Vlaw:

- Don't trust anyone. The whole universe is out to screw you over.
- Talk in a gravelly, throaty voice.
- Emphasise everything you do with gestures. Make everything physical.

THE SARCOMOND INCIDENT

The Sarcomond is a 200-ton Far Trader captained by an Asiman named Danel Vlaw. It is an old and battered trader, built in the heyday of the Kingdom of Drinax, but she's still flying. She is currently docked at the Torpol Downport, undergoing repairs after she was attacked by a scout ship. The Travellers can easily track down Captain Vlaw in the downport bar, but convincing him to talk is a harder proposition. Vlaw fled Asim when it was conquered by the Drinaxians twenty years ago, and despises the nobles of the Floating Palace. Getting him to talk requires either a Persuade, Carouse or Deception check; it is Routine (6+) if he does not know they are from Drinax, and Very Difficult (12+) if he thinks they are working for the conquerors.

Vlaw is initially unwilling to discuss what happened between his ship and the Misery's Company; he is a hard-nosed, independent trader who has had his own share of shady dealings and opportunistic piracy. If the Travellers win his confidence, or reveal that the scout ship was involved in a murderous raid on Clarke, then he gives them an account of what happened. As the Sarcomond approached Torpol, a scout ship approached on a suspiciously tight course. When she came within range, she flipped over, matched velocity with the Sarcomond, and demanded that the Far Trader hand over her cargo.

Vlaw smiles at this point.

'My ship, she has surprises. Two pop-up turrets, you see. Bad news for pirates. I burn the pirate amidships, here and here.'

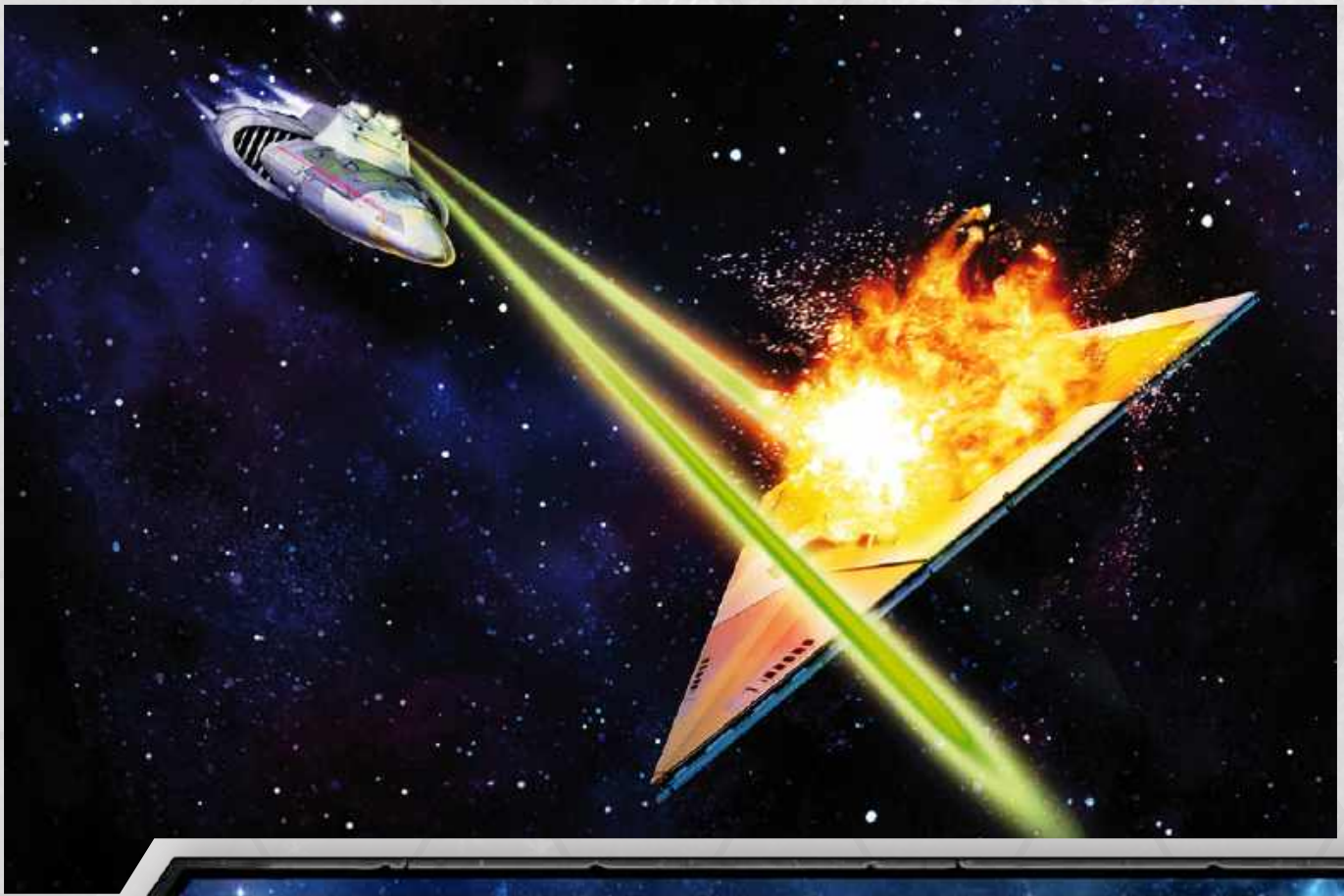
He pokes one of the Travellers in the stomach and chest, for emphasis

'And she is very, very scared. Over the radio, I hear them calling for the jump. Their captain is Vargr, I think. He orders them to jump for Borite.'

TRACKING THE RAIDERS

Vlaw's account sends the Travellers straight to Borite; if they fail to track down Vlaw, then a quick check of star charts presents a limited number of systems where the pirates could have gone. Jump-2 from Torpol puts them in range of Clarke, Blue, Drinax, Asim, Oghma, Marduk and Borite. Three of these systems can be eliminated immediately – they know the pirates did not return to Clarke, and the Travellers have heard no word of pirate attacks on Drinax or Asim.

If the Travellers visit the other systems, consult The Trojan Reach. The trail continues at Borite.



4. THE CASTAWAY

Scanning the Borite system picks up something interesting – a very weak distress call emanating from the gas giant. On approach, the Travellers detect an ancient space station in orbit. The station is more than two thousand years old, and dates back to the old Empire of Sindal. It was once a High Guard outpost of the Sindalian fleet, protecting ships as they refuelled from the hydrogen-rich world below. Now, it is an abandoned antique, crumbling and punctured by thousands of micro-meteorites. It is slowly drifting down into the atmosphere, and will burn up in another five hundred years or so. A successful Average (8+) Electronics (sensors) check (1D x 10 minutes, EDU) in the vicinity of the station picks up several interesting facts.

- The station shows signs of being repaired within the last century, probably by pirates using it as a base, but there is no sign of any present occupancy.
- The distress call is a low-powered automated beacon, consistent with the sort built into a good-quality vacc suit. Someone must have boosted the signal for the Travellers to detect it. A close examination shows that the suit's communications system has been removed and wired into the station's transmitter dish – the suit wearer now has no way of communicating with the outside world unless he goes back to the communications unit.
- There is some debris floating near the space station; analysis shows it to be hull plating and rivets from a small ship, probably the Misery's Company. There is not enough debris for the ship to have broken up; more likely, they docked here to make repairs after being pummelled by the Sarcomond.
- Thermal imaging of the station shows at least one heat source on board. From the trace, it is a humanoid, probably a Vargr, in poor health and in a vacc suit.

Attempting to hail the Vargr brings no response.

Docking with the station is tricky, requiring a Difficult (10+) Pilot check (1D minutes, DEX), due to the extreme age and fragility of the station. Doing anything like ramming it, cutting through the hull or firing ship-mounted weapons is likely to cause parts of the station to break off.

THE SLUMBERING HORROR

The old Sindalian station was indeed used by pirates as a refuge and refuelling station for many years, until His Grace showed up. His Grace was a pirate who claimed to be the illegitimate son of the Duke of Tobia, and amused his crewmates with his lordly airs and graces. In keeping with his noble heritage, he was a collector of art and curiosities from across Known Space. One of his most prized acquisitions was a sculpture that he believed to be a petrified Hiver specimen (and when he found out that Hivers look nothing like folded-up tarantulas, he began to claim it came from a semi-mythical Hiver Queen). In fact, the sculpture came from Foreven Sector.

Every Traveller knows what happens when you bring a mysterious alien artefact onto an isolated space station, especially if the merchant you bought it from swears that it is completely dormant and harmless.

His 'sculpture' awoke, drawn by the heat of human bodies and the psionic trace of their emotions. It unfolded, insectoid limbs stretching out obscenely like chitinous origami. Deposits of petrified acid flaked off, revealing razor-sharp mandibles. The Chamax Hunter's first victim was His Grace. It stalked the rest of the crew through the space station, killing them one by one until the last survivors escaped. Deprived of fresh prey, the Chamax returned to its slumber.

Since then, the space station has been almost completely abandoned except for a few pirate crews who use it as a means of ceremonial execution. If the crew decide that one of their number has failed or betrayed them, they bring the unfortunate victim to the Borite system and abandon him on board the nameless station.

It may happen immediately or it may take several hours, but the presence of heat and life will awaken the Chamax...

HUNTER CHAMAX

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Hunter Chamax	39	9 m
SKILLS	Athletics (dexterity) 3, Gun Combat (acid spray) 0, Melee (bite) 3, Recon 3, Stealth 4, Survival 4, Telepathy 3	
ATTACKS	Acid (10m, 3D), Bite (2D+2)	
TRAITS	Armour (+3), Life Sense, Psionic (8), Radio Sense	
BEHAVIOUR	Omnivore, Pouncer	

Life Sense: The animal is telepathic, but only smart enough to use life detection.
Radio Sense: The animal can hear and communicate in the radio spectrum.

A Chamax is a hostile xenomorph from a world deep in Foreven sector. It resembles a tarantula the size of huge dog, and possesses the ability to secrete a powerful molecular acid from its jaws. On their native world, the creatures are an unstoppable marauding horde that sweeps across the planet, devouring everything in their path. Fortunately, this particular specimen is a sterile Hunter, not a fecund Maternal Chamax that could produce thousands of offspring.

THE PRISONER

The Vargr on the station is Krrsh, former captain of Misery's Company. His crewmates abandoned him here after he impetuously ordered the attack on the Sarcomond. He knows that being cast away on this station is a death sentence, and has heard legends that the monster is drawn to radio signals. By wiring his suit communicator to the station's transmitter dish, he has managed to boost the chances of his distress call being detected and also lure the monster away from him. The one downside is that his rescuers are walking into a trap...

When the Travellers rescue Krrsh, consult page 38 for Krrsh's Tale.

THE STATION

Most of the ancient station is completely non-functional. No light, no gravity, no air, no heat, no functioning computer system, no automatic doors or airlocks – the Travellers have to use vacc suits and operate all the doors manually to move through the station. A few areas have light, heat and thin air, powered by nuclear batteries.

The station is divided into several zones, as shown on the map. Assume it takes one minute to move through a zone, and ten minutes to search a zone with an Average (8+) Recon check (INT). Most of the zones are just stretches of empty corridor and abandoned rooms, but some have locations of interest.

KRRSH THE VARGR

AGE			TERMS	
34			4	
STR	6	INT	4	SKILLS
DEX	8	EDU	5	Astrogation 1, Deception 0, Electronics (comms) 1, Engineer (j-drive) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Gunner (turret) 2, Mechanic 1, Melee (blade) 1, Persuade 2, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Recon 1, Science 0, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2, Vacc Suit 1
END	7	SOC	3	
CHA			10	
ARMOUR			Vacc Suit (+10)	
WEAPONS			Cutlass (3D)	

Playing Krrsh:

- You're really not that bright, but you are used to barking orders and getting your way.
- The loss of your ship humiliated you. You feel broken and defeated, so you're looking for a strong leader to take charge of you.
- Bow your head, hunch your shoulders, whine like a whipped dog.

1. Manual Airlocks: On the far side of these airlocks are the few parts of the station that are still inhabitable. The Chamax can survive in vacuum for brief periods, but prefers the relative warmth and comfort of pressure. It is intelligent enough to work the airlocks in a fumbling way.

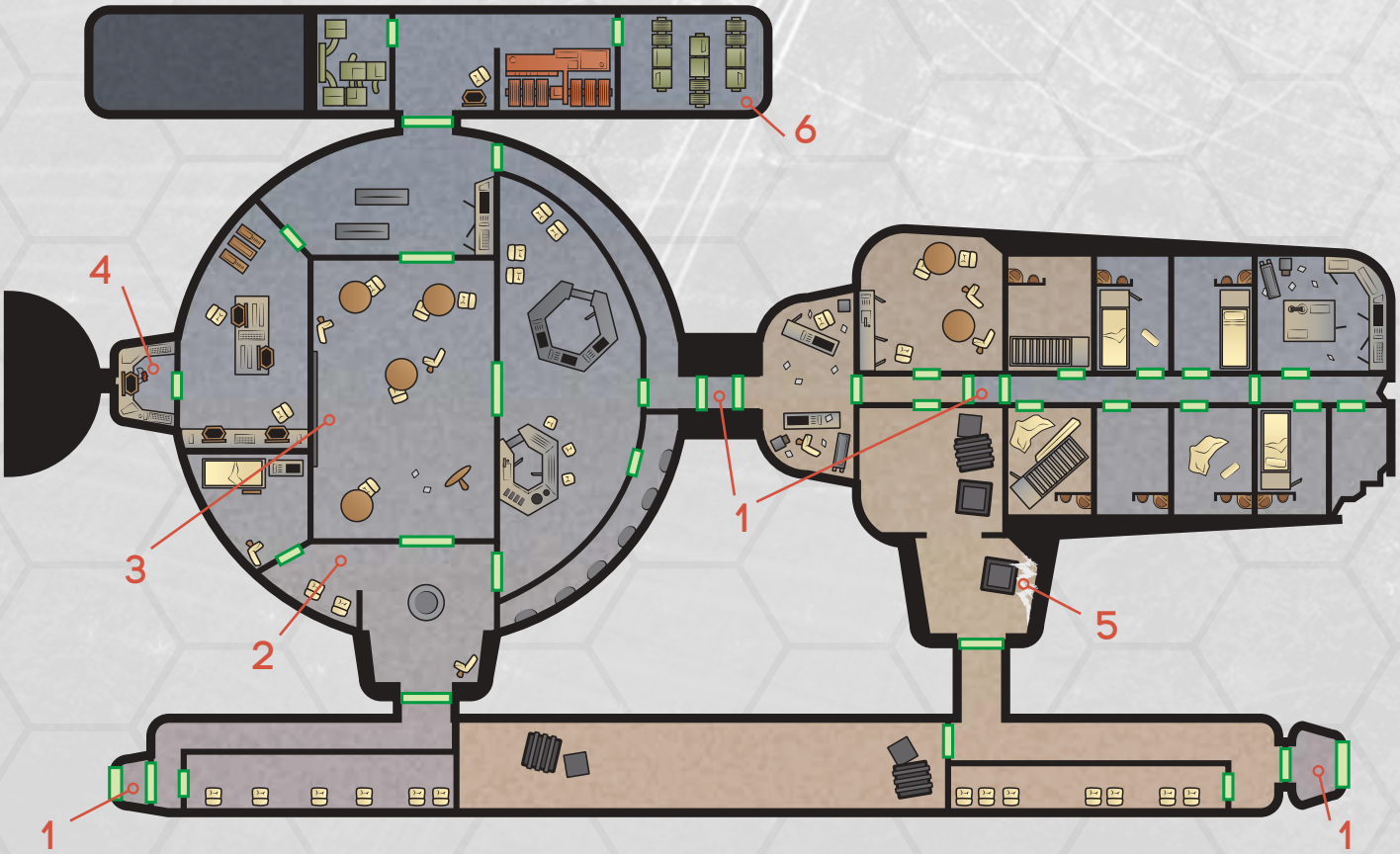
2. Deranged Ravings: One of the previous castaways scrawled messages into the wall here with a shard of metal. The messages speak of 'the ghost' and 'the voice on the radio', but mostly just repeats 'it's coming' over and over again. Nearby, the Travellers find the acid-scorched remains of a vacc suit – something melted through the chest and devoured everything within. A successful Animals, suitable Science or Medic check suggests that the occupant of the vacc suit was partially dissolved and then sucked out. The suit was fitted for a human, not a Vargr – this clearly isn't a fresh kill.

3. Painting of the Emperor: The wall here is decorated with an ancient painting, preserved by the vacuum. It depicts some long-dead Emperor of Sindal, wearing the traditional crown jewels of the Sindalian Empire – the lanthanum-alloy crown, the Thalassan Pearl, the diamond-encrusted rings of Kether and the fabled Eagle of Sol.

4. Communications Dish: The communications system from Krrsh's suit is here, wired into the dish and endlessly broadcasting its distress call.

5. The Chamax's Lair: The Chamax slumbers in this air vent when not hunting. The vent is covered with resinous secretions to make it a comfortable nest for the horror. Digging through the nest turns up a few indigestible remains of victims, like cybernetic implants or artificial teeth.

6. Krrsh's Hiding Place: The Vargr is hiding here until he runs out of oxygen. When his supplies run low, he heads back to the nearest airlock to refill his suit.



BUG HUNT

The Chamax hunts using three different senses – it can detect heat, it can psionically sense the presence of life, and it has an internal organ that 'sees' and 'speaks' in the radio spectrum. It uses all three to pick its targets. The Life Sense trait awakens it when prey arrives at the station; the heat traces allow it to detect weapons and movement, and the radio-spectrum organ allows it to determine which of the targets is the most dominant. It can also transmit its own radio broadcasts; it can use this to create bursts of static that jam communications, or it can mimic the frequency of a distress call. It is not intelligent enough to mimic human voices.

The bug is fast and agile enough to cross two zones in the time it takes the Travellers to move through one. It can only spend a maximum of six minutes in vacuum; if kept in vacuum beyond this time limit, it takes 1D damage per round. It tries to target Travellers who are alone and unarmed. In vacuum, it may use its acid to breach their vacc suits and then drag their corpses back into the habitable zones.

Hearing the Bug: Very Hard (12+) Recon check (1D seconds, INT). Formidable (14+) in vacuum.

Detecting the Bug: Difficult (10+) Electronics (sensors) check (1D x 10 seconds, INT). Needs suitable equipment such as a motion tracker.

Tracking the Bug: Very Hard (12+) Survival check (1D seconds, INT)

FIGHTING THE BUG

Any explosions or projectile weapons may damage the fragile space station. If any attack misses the Chamax and inflicts 10 or more damage, then the station takes a hit. In the pressurised section, a hit causes part of the station to decompress; in the vacuum sections, damage to the station causes a hull breach and can even cause a part of the station to break off from the rest.

The Chamax's primary aim is to kill as many Travellers as possible; in an ideal world, it would also escape on the Travellers' ship afterwards, but it does not have the intelligence to plan towards this eventuality.

The Vargr Krrsh has 10 minutes of air in his suit when the Travellers arrive. He heads to the nearest habitable section when his air runs low, and stays there while refilling his suit (one minute in the habitable area gives him another five minutes of air).

KRRSH'S TALE

The Vargr is pathetically grateful for the rescue, and confesses everything over a bowl of food and a bottle of rum or four. His account is rambling and slightly confused, but covers the following major points:

- He was the captain of Misery's Company, and part of the retinue of a human pirate called Ferrik Redthane.
- His crew abandoned him at the station. They turned on him after he ordered an attack on a freighter that turned out to have more guns than expected. One of his crew was killed in the attack.
- He was also part of the raiding party that hit Clarke.
- Ferrik Redthane was formerly part of the pirate gang commanded by Admiral Darokyn, one of the pirate lords of Theev. Krrsh does not know what happened, but Ferrik and Darokyn quarrelled, and Ferrik now has a price on his head.
- Ferrik needs the protection of one of the other pirate gangs. He launched the raids on Torpol and Clarke to show how dangerous and competent he is.
- As Ferrik dare not set foot on Theev, he's probably sent his trusted lieutenant Miria Silverhand to negotiate with the other gangs on his behalf. Krrsh and Miria hate each other, and Krrsh does not know which gangs she will approach or where she is on Theev.
- If the Travellers give him passage to a safe world, or offer him a place on their crew, he swears to serve them loyally.
- He knows the secret routes to Theev, and will gladly hand them over. Not only does he know a safe landing code, he also knows the location of a refuelling station in an empty region of space approximately one parsec from Theev. This station means the Travellers can use a jump-2 ship to get to Theev.

REFUELLING DUMP

So, after trusting their astronavigation to a drunken, traitorously incompetent Vargr pirate, the Travellers jump into empty space. Jumps like this are always nerve-wracking – if the jump is inaccurate, the Travellers will end up in deep space, with many years of sub-light travel ahead of them if they ever hope to see civilisation again. A bad jump here would be disastrous.

On arrival, a successful Electronics (comms or sensors) check immediately detects a weak beacon signal (if the check fails, make the Travellers sweat for several hours of game time while they scan harder). The fuel dump – assembled at great cost over many years – is almost invisible, as it is the same temperature as the space around it and there is no light except distant starlight to illuminate it. The dump consists of hundreds of 4-dton hydrogen drums linked by pipes. Krrsh tells the Travellers that some of the drums are booby-trapped with 'poisoned' hydrogen – floating in the hydrogen are heavy compounds that damage the interior of a jump drive or automatically cause misjump. He advises the Travellers to always use fuel purifiers on hydrogen from such a fuel dump, even though it might seem to already be refined fuel.

Once the Travellers have refuelled, they can make another jump to the Theev system.

5. BLACKSAND CITY

Using Krrsh's code, the Travellers can pass the watchful eyes of the Skull and land at the Theev DownPort. The port looks like a swarm of titanic black scarabs from above – every landing pad has huge bay doors that close overhead when a ship is docked, to conceal the visitor from watchful eyes and protect them from the dust. The city itself consists of hundreds of skyscrapers that rise from a network of canyons. The skyscrapers are linked by covered walkways.

On arrival at the starport, the Travellers are met by a young woman who introduces herself as a Widow. She has clearly benefited from genetic and cybernetic augmentation, and may even be a clone. She wears loose black robes that could conceal any number of weapons. The Widow explains the simple laws of Blacksand City. Here, in the starport, or the Upper City, or any building marked by red flags, the Law of the Lords holds sway. The Law of Lords is no murder, no weapons fire, nothing that offends the calm and tranquility of the city. Anywhere else on the planet surface, anywhere in the canyons below, anywhere not marked by red flags, another law holds sway – the Law of the Street. The only restriction is a ban on any weapon that might breach the city's environmental containment. The punishment for breaking either law is the same – death.

The red flag zones move, so some buildings in the Lower City are protected on one day, and left open to the Law of the Streets the next.

THE WIDOWS OF BLACKSAND

The Widows are the law enforcement of this lawless world. No-one is sure how many there are – black-robed, hooded figures can be seen on every street, but are all of them genetically augmented assassins? The Widows are all linked by cybernetic implants; it is debatable whether they are individuals or a single entity that occupies multiple bodies. They enforce the Laws with perfect lethality.

BLACKSAND WIDOW

AGE			TERMS	
16			4	
STR	10	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	14	EDU	10	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Deception 1, Diplomat 0, Electronics (comms) 1, Flyer (grav) 2, Gun Combat (energy) 3, Gun Combat (slug) 3, Investigate 2, Medic 1, Melee (unarmed) 3, Persuade 1, Steward 1, Streetwise 2
END	12	SOC	9	
EQUIPMENT			Enhanced Vision, Neural Comm (TL14)	
ARMOUR			Lightweight Polycarapace Armour (+12), Subdermal Armour (+3)	
WEAPONS			Gauss Rifle (4D), Laser Pistol (3D+3), Stunner (3D)	

Playing the Widows:

- Never say a word; just smile like light glinting off a razor-edged knife

BLACKSAND CITY

1. Downport
2. The Grand Hotel
3. Cliff District
4. Kallos Shipyards
5. The Rose Pavilion
6. Murghen Consortium
7. Asharden Camp
8. The Scrapheap
9. Brain Dimming
10. Church of the Traveller
11. Tuk's
12. The House Without Questions
13. Blood Pit

BLACKSAND JUSTICE

Of course, the Widows are not the only danger on Blacksand. The streets enforce their own justice. If the Travellers start causing trouble, then the pirate gangs push back; and there are lots of them, and they have lots of guns. Causing trouble on Theev gets you killed unless you are part of a pirate gang or have allies there. That is why Ferrik Redthane dares not return to Theev after being banished from Admiral Darokyn's following – he needs allies, or he'll end up with his throat cut in some Lower City alleyway.

THE UPPER CITY

The 'safe' parts of Blacksand feel like a corporate enclave or a high-quality hotel. Pristine corridors lead to comfortable meeting rooms and entertainment suites where businessmen and diplomats can meet and discuss matters of importance. Everyone in the upper city speaks in circumlocutions, as if embarrassed to admit they are discussing piracy and murder.

There are several areas of interest here.

- The Grand Hotel: Rising like the Sword of Damocles over the city, the Grand Hotel is the biggest and best hotel on Theev. It caters primarily to visitors from the Imperium; there are other hotels owned by the same consortium for pirates and thieves.
- Cliff District: The corporations based in this area specialise in illegal weapons, mercenary forces, banned technologies and other... questionable activities. It's a one-stop shop for revolutionaries and war criminals. 'Going off the cliff' is Blacksand slang for resorting to illegal methods.
- Kallos Shipyards: The front company for the Skull's shipyards. They supply weapons and ships to pirate gangs, and recycle stolen ships for scrap.
- The Rose Pavilion: An expensive and exclusive restaurant with many private booths for secretive discussions and deals.
- Murghen Consortium: A mercenary group based on Theev; the Murghen Consortium has its own ships and nearly a thousand trained soldiers. It is commanded by Johanna Murghen.
- Asharden Camp: There are people who arrive on Theev without the money to pay the extortionate prices of the Upper City, and without the grit and fighting skills to survive below. The lucky ones end up in the Asharden Camp, a refugee camp on the edge of the upper city. Many of the denizens end up in virtual slavery in the lower city.

There are various encounters the referee might like to develop for the Upper City.

- This is an excellent place to meet patrons like those on page 263.
- A trio of Widows burst in and barge through wherever the Travellers are. They cut a hole in the window, and one of them steps through while the other two seal the environmental breach. Outside, the third Widow – showing no signs of discomfort in the thin atmosphere – assembles a sniper rifle and shoots someone on the streets far below.
- A spy named Gesh questions the Travellers about their association with Drinax.
- The Travellers are invited to dine with Admiral Darokyn (see page 45) at the Rose Pavilion. He has heard about their inquiries in town, and wishes to discuss the matter of Ferrik Redthane.

THE LOWER CITY

The unflagged zones of the Lower City are exceedingly dangerous; they are dark, filthy and crammed with all sorts of depravity. On street level, it is a tangled mess of bars, brothels, flop-houses and cheap entertainments for those on shore leave. Behind the cheap stalls, there are more exotic and expensive pleasures – alien drugs, strange churches, illegal technologies.

The Lower City is in a canyon; with a breather mask, you can step outdoors here, as long as you don't stay outside too long.

There are several places of interest in the Lower City.

- **The Scrapheap:** A massive junkyard of stolen goods and wrecked ships at the edge of the city. Some people even live in the burnt-out hulks of old ships.
- **Brain Dimming:** The name is a reference to the old practice of 'jump dimming', where the lights on a ship are temporarily lowered to divert power to the jump engines. At Brain Dimming, you can buy any drug you can name, as well as lots more you never heard of, still more you can't pronounce, and even some you can't metabolise. The den caters for addicts of all species and tastes.
- **Church of the Traveller:** This cult has many adherents on Theev, especially in the Lower City. The cult believes that God is travelling the universe incognito in human form, spying on Humaniti in order to judge the species. Some believers practice charity and kindness, in the hopes that one of their beneficiaries will be God in disguise; others believe that serial murder is literally the best way to find God.

- **'Tuk's:** One of the better – or at least safer – bars in the city, the owner 'Tuk is a K'Kree bartender from the far side of the Imperium. Some of the toughest pirates have turned vegetarian after months of eating at 'Tuks. The bar has only one bouncer – 'Tuk herself.
- **The House Without Questions:** A cryptic establishment, the House Without Questions is said to be older than Theev. It is a place of last resort for Travellers. One may go to the House if you have nowhere else to go, and they will take you in, clothe you, feed you and protect you, no questions asked. You may also go to the House and hire them to perform a task. If it is possible, they will quote a price, and if you pay the price, they will somehow accomplish your desired goal – again, no questions asked on either side. In effect, it is halfway between a charity and an assassin's guild.
- **Blood Pit:** A bloodsports arena, where sophonts fight to the death against monsters or each other. Gladiators, prisoners fighting alien predators, steel cage matches against killer robots, running gun battles – anything goes in the Blood Pit.

The referee might like to develop the following encounters in the Lower City.

- The Travellers are attacked by one of the many roving 'Blood Gangs' – scavengers who attack and murder visitors to the city, and survive by selling stolen goods and organs. The Blood Gang may flee if the Travellers show sufficient firepower.
- A refugee called Vii Lon begs the Travellers for passage offworld. She came to Theev as part of a corporate team from Tobia subsector to hire mercenaries, but her employers were killed by assassins in the Lower City, and she's now penniless and homeless on the streets.
- A band of pirates spotted the Travellers' ship landing at the Theev starport, and intend to steal it. As most starships have high-tech security systems, their approach to theft is a simple and direct one – kidnap one of the crew, then chop bits off him until he hands over the codes.
- The Travellers run into one of their Contacts, who is in need of help – he is being harassed by thugs, threatened by pirates, or has a mission that needs doing.

THUGS

A few generic thugs to throw at your players.

BIG BRUSIER

STR	10	INT	4	SKILLS
DEX	4	EDU	4	Athletics (strength) 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Melee (bludgeon) 1, Persuade 1, Streetwise 1
END	10	SOC	3	
ARMOUR				Jack (+1)
WEAPONS				Heavy Cudgel (2D)

MACK THE KNIFE

STR	7	INT	5	SKILLS
DEX	9	EDU	4	Melee (blade) 2, Recon 1, Streetwise 1
END	5	SOC	3	
ARMOUR				Jack (+1)
WEAPONS				Monoblade (3D, AP10)

GUNMAN IN A TRENCHCOAT

STR	6	INT	5	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	4	Gun Combat (slug) 2, Stealth 1, Recon 1
END	7	SOC	3	
ARMOUR				Jack (+1)
WEAPONS				Body Pistol (3D-3)

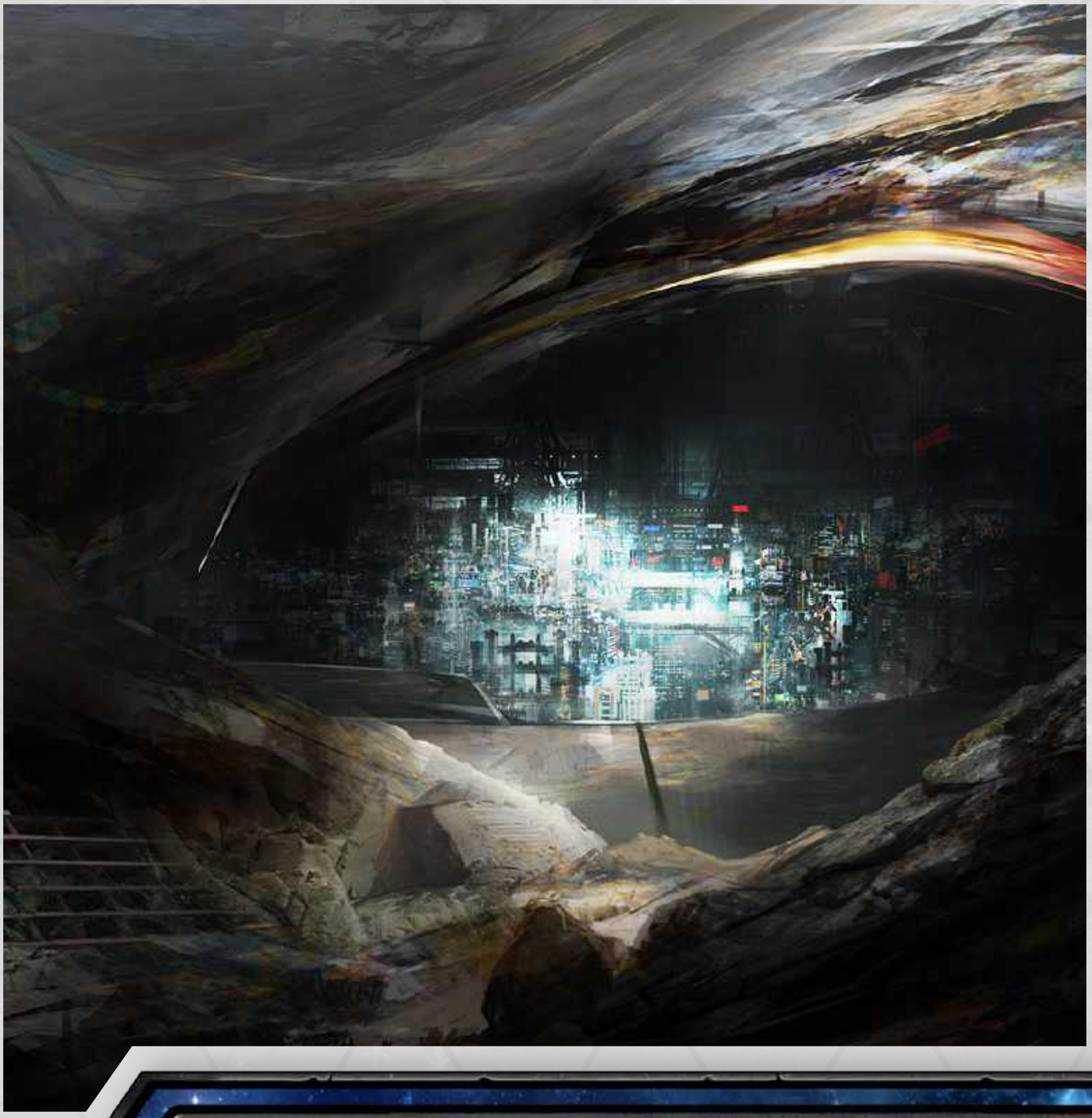
ALLEY KAT

STR	5	INT	4	SKILLS
DEX	5	EDU	4	Melee (unarmed) 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2
END	7	SOC	3	
ARMOUR				Jack (+1)
WEAPONS				Small Cudgel (2D)

INVESTIGATIONS IN BLACKSAND

Asking direct questions in Blacksand City gets you stabbed – unless you look tough enough to be the one doing the stabbing. There are several ways to find information in the city; the amount of information gained depends on the Effect of the skill check performed:

- **Threats & Intimidation:** Difficult (10+) Persuade check (1D hours, STR). If successful, the Travellers find an informant who tells them what they need to know. If unsuccessful, the Travellers make more trouble for themselves.
- **Gossip & Rumours:** Difficult (10+) Carouse or Streetwise check (1D days, INT). Slow, but pretty safe.
- **Bribery:** Average (8+) Broker check (1D hours, SOC). You could buy someone's grandmother for Cr5; buying information is pricier, averaging at Cr5000. Fail, and they rip you off.
- **Krrsh's Contacts:** The pirate Krrsh knows the gangs on Blacksand – mainly because he's annoyed most of them in the past. He can point the Travellers towards Admiral Darokyn. He also knows about Miria Silverhand.
- **Encounters:** If the Travellers wander around Blacksand for long enough in the Upper City, Darokyn will contact them.



6. THE GIRL & THE GANGS

While there are dozens of pirate crews and gangs on Theev, four in particular are important to this adventure. One we have already encountered – the small band of pirates working for Ferrik Redthane who attacked Torpol and Clarke. The second is one of the most powerful, and certainly the best organised, groups – the retinue of the pirate Admiral Darokyn. Up until recently, Ferrik was one of Darokyn's followers, but now Darokyn wants Ferrik dead (see the sidebar on page 49 for details why!).

The other two gangs are almost as powerful as Darokyn's, and both are hungry and eager to recruit new blood. One gang is led by Petyr Vallis, a raider with a grudge against the Aslan and a habit of attacking planets. The second is commanded by an Aslan named Hroal Irontooth, a fearsome pirate. Ferrik needs to convince one of these two gangs that he is worth protecting from Darokyn.

Without protection, Ferrik cannot come to Theev. He is hiding out in another system, and the Travellers will never find him... unless they can lure him out, or convince someone to tell them where he is.

The Girl: Miria Silverhand is Ferrik's lieutenant and emissary. She arrives on Theev a few hours after the Travellers. She heads into the Lower City and makes her hiding place in part of the Scrapheap. Through her spies and contacts, she approaches Hroal Irontooth and Petyr Vallis and makes Ferrik's case to them. Miria knows the city very well – the Travellers have next to no chance of finding her on their own. She rarely leaves the Scrapheap. Instead, she pays beggar-boys and penniless pirates to run errands for her and take messages to Hroal and Petyr.

FINDING FERRIK

There are several ways for the Travellers to track down Redthane, and they all go through Miria:

- Admiral Darokyn can tell the Travellers where Miria is, if he feels they are trustworthy.
- So can either of the two other gangs, but the Travellers will have to pay dearly for that information.
- If the Travellers infiltrate or spy on the gangs, they can identify Miria's messengers and follow them back to her hiding place.
- The Travellers could pretend to be a new gang that is willing to ally with Ferrik, and lure Miria into making contact with them.

Once the Travellers have located Miria, there are three ways they can handle the situation:

- Travel to the Scrapheap, capture her and force her to talk (see page 48).
- Travel to the Scrapheap and search her room there for the location of Ferrik's ship (see page 48).
- Meet her in the Lower City in a red flag zone and convince her that she should betray her current employer.
- Meet her in the Lower City in a red flag zone and trick her into telling them Ferrik's location.
- Sneak onto Miria's ship, which currently docked at the Skull – she flies the 400-ton armed salvager Mercifuge. See *Ships of the Reach* page 21.

If the Travellers do not act, then Miria negotiates a place in Petyr Vallis' organisation for herself, Ferrik and their two ships. With Vallis' backing, Ferrik has the protection of a powerful gang and a fleet of nearly a dozen ships. Vallis leads them off to raid Aslan planets in the spinward parts of Tliowaha, Goertal and Nora'a subsectors, beyond the Travellers' reach.

ADMIRAL DAROKYN

A former Imperial officer (see page 49), Darokyn is a cultured, refined gentleman. He is in his late sixties, though judicious use of anagathics has kept him in fighting trim. He wears a crisp naval uniform without any insignias other than a silver skull-and-crossbones and a golden D. He may be a pirate, but he acts like a model naval officer.

Playing Darokyn:

- Be charming, urbane, cultured. You're better than everyone around you. Talk like you are at a dinner thrown by the Emperor in your honour, not a pirate in a den of thieves.
- Keep your posture ramrod-straight.
- Never admit directly that you want Ferrik killed – above all else, conceal why Ferrik fled your employ (see page 49).

Meeting Place: Darokyn meets the Travellers at his preferred table at the Rose Pavilion restaurant in the Upper City.

The Organisation: Darokyn's gang is clearly divided between his trusted lieutenants, many of whom are also ex-Imperial navy officers and crew, and his pirate hangers-on. The pirates try to mimic the naval discipline of their fellows, but usually fall short. The organisation is extremely efficient and well-trained for a pirate group, and has a reputation for getting the job done with minimal loss of life.

The Fleet: Darokyn commands a flotilla of nearly thirty ships, more than half of which he took with him from the Imperial navy when he fled. None of the stolen ships were more than a thousand dtons, and were primarily small interceptors and support craft, but it was still a major blow to Imperial pride.

Negotiations: Dealing with Admiral Darokyn requires a Difficult (10+) Diplomat check (SOC) to impress him, or simply SOC 10+. If he decides to trust the Travellers, then he explains that Ferrik was once part of his retinue, but after a... difference of opinion, they parted company. He would not weep if Ferrik were to perish. He hints that he could find out where Miria is, if the Travellers promise to ensure that Ferrik dies quietly and thoroughly, and that they do not return to Theev within the next year – long enough for the city to forget that Ferrik Redthane ever existed.

PETYR VALLIS

The first thing the Travellers notice when they meet Petyr Vallis is his eyes, pale blue and colder than the deepest space. His face and hands are marked with a lattice of tiny faded scars. He moves like a cat, balancing on the balls of his feet, always in motion. He has a strangely compelling, charismatic personality, but any Traveller with Science (psychology) or a high INT can tell that Petyr is a borderline psychopath.

Petyr hates the Aslan pirate Hroal Irontooth, and would do almost anything to see him brought down.

Playing Petyr:

- Smile at all the wrong times.
- Peytr suffered horrible injuries at the hands of Aslan slavers from the Glorious Empire, and his wife and child were killed by them. He is determined to wreak bloody vengeance upon all Aslan. Let your absolute hatred of the Aslan seep into every sentence.
- Don't let anyone push you around. You have built your criminal empire from nothing using only your willingness to hurt others and never give up.

Meeting Place: Petyr's base is in the lower stories of a tower. It is a red-flagged zone, and even a crazy psychopath like Petyr won't cross the Widows. If he has to kill a Traveller, he invites them to step outside onto the balcony – which isn't covered by the red flags.

The Organisation: Petyr has recruited a band of motivated cut-throats. They all want money, but they prefer to take it from the Aslan Hierate. Some are just pirates who are willing to fight against the Hierate, but most have grudges or other reasons to fight back. Like their leader, they are all extremely violent and quick to use force. The organisation is unstable, and will likely collapse in a few years when revenge becomes a tired lure and some of the members decide they want money instead, but right now, the Vallis gang is a knife aimed at the Hierate colonies.

The Fleet: Petyr and his followers prefer fast, heavily armed raiders. In fact, the Travellers' Harrier represents their ideal sort of ship. He has only eight ships, but they include two Fiery-class 400-ton gunships and two 600-ton corsairs.

Negotiations: Dealing with Petyr is simple. If the Travellers are willing to give him support against the hated Aslan, then he is willing to deal on fair terms. Otherwise, he wants money – lots of money. If the Travellers are unwilling to meet either of these demands, then he has no time for them.

For Miria's location, he wants either Cr50000 or a promise that he can use any havens that the Travellers have relationships with as launching platforms for his war with the Aslan.

For his help apprehending Fezzik, he wants MCr1, or the promise that the Travellers join his war against the Aslan.

Allying with Fezzik reduces the Travellers standing with the Aslan Hierate by 1D.

HROAL IRONTOOTH

The Aslan Irontooth is the most conventional of the three pirates – he's in this for the loot. He left the Hierate in search of power, glory and wealth, but now misses home. He refuses to admit this to anyone, and sublimates his instinctive desire for territory into violence and savagery.

Playing Hroal Irontooth

- Don't talk. Roar.
- Don't negotiate. Demand.
- Be all the pirate you can be. Your Aslan blood cries out for territory, but your human followers would never understand your desire for dirt.

Meeting Place: Hroal holds court in a low-down dive called the Bilge Pump.

The Organisation: Hroal commands a gang of some fifty blood-thirsty bastards. It is a mix of species – human, Aslan, a few Vargr, a pair of Yonts and even an uplifted ape named Blackfur. They target Imperial shipping along Borderlands subsector.

The Fleet: The jewel of Hroal's fleet is his flagship, a 1,200 ton Halaheike-class pocket warship. His other ships are a motley mix of converted freighters, armed scouts, and salvage-patched monstrosities.

Negotiations: The Travellers need to impress Hroal with their determination and strength; this is a Difficult (10+) Persuade check (STR). He will give them Miria's location or even help them hunt down Ferrik if they give him what he secretly wants – land. He will never ask for this directly, but if the Travellers promise to convince King Oleb to give the Aslan territory when the kingdom of Drinax is restored, then Hroal will help them. Otherwise, the Travellers can win his aid in finding Miria if they offer him something of value worth at least Cr50000 Credits.

MIRIA SILVERHAND

Miria started out as a steward on board an Imperial passenger liner, on the profitable Floriani route, taking care of rich aristocrats on the Spinward end of the Grand Tour. The Ancient ruins on Floria attract many visitors. Her ship was attacked, and the rest of the crew murdered by pirates. Miria was captured by the raiders, and proved to have previously unknown determination and ruthlessness. Within a year, she went from slave to lieutenant; within four, she had her own ship.

Her right arm was crippled in the attack; she had it replaced with a cybernetic limb.

MIRIA SILVERHAND

AGE			TERMS	
30			3	
STR	6	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	9	EDU	8	Admin 0, Astrogation 2, Athletics (dexterity) 1, Carouse 0, Deception 1, Electronics (comms) 1, Electronics (computers) 2, Electronics (sensors) 1, Engineer (power) 1, Flyer (grav) 1, Gambler 1, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Gunner (turret) 1, Heavy Weapons (man portable) 1, Leadership 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Persuade 0, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Steward 1, Stealth 0, Vacc Suit 1
END	8	SOC	6	
EQUIPMENT			Miria's cyberarm gives her STR 15	
ARMOUR			Boarding Vacc Suit (+13)	
WEAPONS			Gauss Pistol (3D, AP 3, Auto 2), Rapid-fire Machinegun (3D, Auto 4)	

HEADING INTO THE SCRAPHEAP

If the Travellers cannot lure Miria out, then they must find her in the Scrapheap. Picking their way across the landscape of shattered ships and the hills of rust and trash leads the Travellers to a small complex of wrecked hulls that have been welded together. A dozen scrapped ships make up this bizarre structure – Miria is somewhere inside that maze of corridors, staterooms and cavernous hulls.

Red flags flutter at the entrance, but a close examination shows these are fake flags – the poor denizens of the Scrapheap use these flags to scare off thugs from the Lower City.

If the Travellers sneak into the Scrapheap, they can make their way to Miria in disguise; however, if they arrive openly, she knows they are coming and may set up an ambush if she has reason to believe they are coming to attack her.

Miria's lair is on the upper deck of a downed Fat Trader. The lower cargo deck is flooded with a toxic swamp of chemical waste and heavy metals, but the upper deck is still habitable. The wreck connects to the rest of the Scrapyard via the aft ceiling iris valve. Miria is waiting in the bridge with her rapid-fire machinegun (see Central Supply Catalogue, page 125) resting on the captain's chair in the middle of the bridge. The doors down the main corridor of the deck are rusted open, giving her an uninterrupted field of fire.

If severely injured, Miria activates a self-destruct suicide bomb built into her cybernetic arm; this blast does the same damage as a frag grenade and has a one-round countdown.

The location of Ferrik Redthane's hiding place can be found among Miria's personal possessions.

SNEAKING ONTO THE SKULL

Alternatively, the Travellers can travel up to the Highport and locate Miria's ship, the Mercifuge. Security in the Skull is not especially tight, and an Average (8+) Stealth check (DEX) gets the Travellers to the ship without being seen. However, the whole asteroid is a red flag zone under the protection of the Widows.

Three of the five crewmembers are on the ship, doing maintenance and repairs. The ship is locked down and needs Miria's access codes. It can be hacked, but doing so is Formidable (14+) Electronics (computers) check (1D minutes, INT). Getting access to the navigation logs is trivially easy, though.

The Jump Location: However the Travellers get to the location, it leads them to Ferrik's hiding place. He is a single jump away, in the Palindrome system, hiding on the fourth moon of the system's gas giant

MIRIA'S CREW

STR	5	**INT**	7	**SKILLS**
DEX	7	**EDU**	6	Electronics (computers) 1, Engineer 0, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Gunner (turret) 1, Mechanic 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Stealth 0, Recon 1
END	5	**SOC**	5	
ARMOUR				Vacc Suit (+4)
WEAPONS				Body Pistol (3D-3)

7. AMBUSH!

The final part of this mission is the capture of Ferrik Redthane, alive or dead. He pilots a 200-ton Far Trader, the Janal Torsk. She has two double turrets, each equipped with twin pulse lasers, and carries a full crew of ten – five crewmen, four marines, and Ferrik himself.

The Janal Torsk is currently landed in the icy methane wastes of the fourth moon, a nameless rock tagged as 540PD-5/4. If any ship approaches, the pirates wait in the hope they go unseen; if the ship then conducts a sensor scan of the moon, the pirates assume they have been detected and either attack or try to flee, depending on how well armed the Travellers are.

FERRIK REDTHANE

Ferrik comes originally from Belgard, a world halfway across the Reach where spacefarers are worshipped as heroes. He dreamed of going into space, and took his chance when a pirate ship landed for repairs. He ran away from home at the age of 12, and has been a pirate ever since. He is a wild young pilot, famed for his daring and willingness to push the boundaries of sanity and safety.

KILLING REDTHANE

Killing Redthane is easy – just keep firing at the Janal Torsk until she breaks apart. The pirate ship is moderately well armed, but the Harrier outguns it, and if the Travellers have brought help from Theev, then Redthane is even more outmatched. If the Janal Torsk's hull is breached, then Redthane makes one desperate plea for clemency – see the sidebar on Darokyn's Secret. If the Travellers keep firing, then the ship is destroyed and Redthane's corpse can be scooped out of space afterwards.

CAPTURING REDTHANE

Taking the pirate alive is trickier. The best option is to trick him into surrendering; they could lure him into an ambush if they have captured or deceived Miria Silverhand, or pretend to be a damaged ship that misjumped into the system and let the pirate come to them. Otherwise, they could land on the ice moon, travel across country, and then storm the Janal Torsk while it is landed, or cripple the pirate ship and board it.

DAROKYN'S SECRET

If Redthane believes he is in danger of being captured or killed, he contacts the Travellers with a last-ditch offer. He was kicked out of Darokyn's gang because he uncovered Darokyn's secret. He'll sell that secret to the Travellers in exchange for his life. The secret is useless without proof, and he'll tell the Travellers how to get that proof if they spare him.

Redthane discovered that Darokyn is still in contact with Imperial Intelligence. They are secretly supporting his pirate gang, and use the Admiral as their spy and agent in the wilder sections of the Trojan Reach. Redthane managed to obtain proof of this, by intercepting and recording some of Darokyn's communications from the Imperium, but these intercepted files are stored on a secure computer onboard Darokyn's flagship. If the Travellers can get these files, they can either blackmail Darokyn or bring his whole organisation down from within. The files might also give them clues about Imperial anti-piracy operations in the sector.

WRAPPING UP

Bringing Redthane back to Torpol and Clarke gets the Travellers the MCr2.5 bounty. It also moves both planets two steps towards haven status.

If the Travellers bring Redthane back for justice, then the two worlds agree on a compromise sentence. Redthane is frozen in a Clarke-style carbon tomb, then placed in orbit of Torpol as an eternal warning to other pirates who dare offend against the unwritten law of the Trojan Reach.

FERRIK REDTHANE

AGE			TERMS	
38			5	
STR	6	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	10	EDU	4	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Astrogation 1, Broker 2, Carouse 1, Electronics (comms) 1, Electronics (computers) 2, Electronics (sensors) 1, Engineer 0, Gunner (turret) 3, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Mechanic 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Leadership 2, Tactics (naval) 1, Stealth 1
END	8	SOC	6	
ARMOUR			Boarding Vacc Suit (+13)	
WEAPONS			Gauss Pistol (3D, AP 3, Auto 2)	

REDTHANE'S CREW

STR	5	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	6	Electronics (computers) 1, Electronics (sensors) 1, Engineer 0, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Gunner (turret) 1, Mechanic 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Stealth 0, Recon 1
END	5	SOC	5	
ARMOUR			Vacc Suit (+4)	
WEAPONS			Body Pistol (3D-3)	

REDTHANE'S MARINES

STR	9	INT	5	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	6	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Gunner 0, Melee (blade) 1, Mechanic 0, Stealth 0, Recon 1, Vacc Suit 2
END	9	SOC	5	
ARMOUR			Boarding Vacc Suit (+13)	
WEAPONS			ACR (3D, Auto 3), Cutlass (3D)	

C H A P T E R - F I V E

TREASURE SHIP

".... shall not contest, protest, intercede or in any way hinder the annexation of these worlds, which are deemed to be within the territory of the Aslan Hierate...
- The Treaty of Fist

This adventure takes place in the Borderland subsector of the Trojan Reach. The year is assumed to be 1105. The Travellers can begin the adventure in any system where rumours can reach them.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The Travellers learn that the engines of an Imperial Treasure Ship have malfunctioned, and the ship is currently grounded at the neutral port of Arunisiir. They've got a chance to steal one of the greatest prizes in the Trojan Reach.

Arunisiir is a world divided between Humaniti and Aslan; once the pirates arrive in-system, they need to either come up with a plan to capture the grounded Treasure Ship or else infiltrate the crew and get a berth on board.

Once on the Treasure Ship, the pirates discover the ship was sabotaged, as part of a pirate plan to rob the ship. The saboteur is still on board, and the ship may jump into a pirate ambush after leaving Arunisiir.

Pirate saboteurs are not the only spies in the crew. The General Development Company has a scheme that plays on the Treasure Ship's reputation; they intend to plant a fake treaty in the vault. The Treasure Ship jumps to Tech-World, where GeDeCo's agent obtains the codes needed to open the secure vault. From there, the ship travels to Byrni, where it runs into a standoff between the Imperial forces and the old Sindalian fleet that still patrols that system. If GeDeCo's plan comes to fruition, then the Treasure Ship is boarded and the false treaty is discovered.

All that, however, depends on the actions of the pirates...

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Treasure Ship is a non-linear adventure – the Travellers can approach the challenge of looting the eponymous ship in any way they choose. The referee should respond to the Travellers' actions by adding detail wherever they investigate. The adventure is divided into three sections:

- The Thieves of Arunisiir covers how the pirates learn of the downed ship, getting to Arunisiir, and the initial state of the ship.
- Voyage to the Hierate describes the repaired Treasure Ship's journey from Arunisiir to Tech-World to Byrni, visiting several other systems en route.
- The Treasure Ship describes the Treasure Ship itself, its crew, and its security systems. It also covers the Imperial escorts that protect the Treasure Ship.

Three subplots complicate the pirates' task.

- The GeDeCo's plan to use the Treasure Ship to plant a fake treaty, thus stirring tensions between the Aslan Hierate and the neutral worlds of the Trojan Reach.
- The attempt by the pirate Hroal Irontooth to capture the Treasure Ship.
- Tensions and intrigue on board the Treasure Ship itself.

The most likely tactics used by the Travellers are:

- Infiltrate the crew of the Treasure Ship on Arunisiir, gather intelligence about it, then either steal some valuables or sabotage it from within.
- Attack the ship while it's grounded at Arunisiir.
- Infiltrate the ship at Arunisiir, learn its planned course, then intercept it.
- Infiltrate the ship, learn about the GeDeCo scheme, and use it to rob the vault.
- Infiltrate the ship, stir up dissent in the crew, lead a mutiny.
- Ally with Hroal Irontooth to capture the Treasure Ship.
- Shadow the ship until an opportunity arises to rob it at Byrni.
- Some Travellers infiltrate the ship, while others shadow it in the Drinaxi Harrier or another pirate ship.

Any tactic has a chance of succeeding, but the Travellers will need to adapt to changing circumstances in order to win the prize.

The Competition

Another band of pirates have designs on the contents of the Treasure Ship. The Aslan Hroal Irontooth plans to steal its cargo. Three of the crew – a Marine named Salvesdes, a mechanic called Felmar and a launch pilot called Hanshaw – all work for the Aslan pirate. The original plan was to cause the *Martin II* to misjump into the outer reaches of the Tech-World system, where Irontooth's flotilla lurks in wait. Felmar worked on the jump drive, and was under orders to alter the plotted navigation solution so the ship jumped to the wrong part of the target system.

Unfortunately, Felmar's sabotage was discovered by Chief Engineer Eco. Felmar panicked and opened the safety interlocks on the jump drive, causing the explosion that crippled the ship and forced it to land on Arunisiir.

Now, the two surviving pirate spies, Salvesdes and Hanshaw, need to work out another way to get the *Martin II* into the trap – or they'll face the wrath of Hroal Irontooth.

Secrets of the Reach

On one side of the Trojan Reach is the Imperium; on the other, the fast-expanding Aslan Hierate. Between the two are hundreds of independent human worlds.

The Aslan have an insatiable desire for territory. Biological and cultural forces demand they expand. The Imperium, hoping to avoid another border war, tries to slow the inexorable advance of the Hierate by either placating them with gifts or diverting their growth into unclaimed space. The neutral worlds between the Imperium and the Hierate are pawns in this game of empires.

The major brake on Aslan expansion is the Treaty of Fhaharl, which guarantees that Aslan clans will never come within thirty parsecs of the Imperial borders. Doing so would incur the displeasure of the most powerful clans – and it is in the Imperium's best interest to keep these clans strong, so they can enforce the treaty.

The peace is imperfect. There are inevitable border skirmishes, raids, and renegades who defy the treaty, especially when the major clans fall to infighting. Still, it has held for hundreds of years. The neutral worlds of the Reach are free because of the treaty.

The sinister megacorporation known as GeDeCo was founded to improve the standing of the disparate human colonies, but it now aims to influence the course of history across the Reach. Their psychohistorians predict that unless the Aslan are stopped, they will inevitably conquer the whole Domain of Deneb and cut the Spinward Marches off from the Imperium. The Peace of Ftaharl cannot stand against the inevitability of demographics. The Imperium's policy of containment and appeasement is futile – the only way Humaniti can hold this region of space is through bloody war! GeDeCo intends to turn the whole Trojan Reach into a firebreak to stop the Aslan advance.

Imperial Treasure Ships carry more than rare goods and valuable items – they also carry secret diplomatic messages between the Imperial Moot and Aslan Hierate. GeDeCo's agents intend to plant a fake message in the cargo of the Treasure Ship, a false treaty that sanctions the Aslan conquest of a dozen worlds on the far side of the Trojan Reach. If this treaty were to be revealed – say, by a pirate attack on the Treasure Ship, or by an unexpected customs inspection that somehow breaches the secure vault – then public sentiment across the Reach would turn towards war. Even if the Aslan make no hostile moves (and they would not, as they would still be bound by the real Treaty of Ftaharl), the fake treaty would drive the neutral worlds into GeDeCo's arms.

Just spreading rumours about such a treaty is not enough. GeDeCo needs the legitimacy that comes from finding the treaty on a Treasure Ship with an open vault.

Opening the Vault: GeDeCo has two agents on board the *Martin II*. The ship's navigator and the purser are both employed by the corporation. The vault's door is connected to the ship's navigation computer, and Navigator Osha has installed a black box device that harvests data from the vault lock and the ship's navigation system. When the ship arrives at Tech-World, this black box will be taken to a TL15 supercomputer and used to crack the vault code, so the vault can be opened ahead of schedule at Byrni.

Purser Vaughan has the fake treaty concealed in his quarters. When the vault opens, his role is to ensure the treaty is 'discovered' at the right time. The two agents are unaware of each other's identity, but both know someone else is working for GeDeCo.

1. THE THIEVES OF ARUNISIIR

Rumours are the lifeblood of piracy. There is little chance of finding a valuable prize by chance alone. Pirates scour the shipping registers and port schedules for clues about potential victims. They pay spotters in ports to track the movements of freighters and merchants; they shadow other ships as they go to and from the starports, looking for any sign that a target is worth the risk. In bars and dives across known space, rumours are traded and sold.

Some rumours are evergreen. Knowing that a merchant makes a regular round trip between five systems, or that a corporation has a mining base on a particular moon is always useful to pirates. Such rumours can be exploited at any time. Just lie in wait in the right place, and your prey will come to you.

Other rumours, though, must be acted on immediately.

The Treasure Ship *Martin II* was supposed to cross the Reach as part of a convoy of Imperial megafreighters and their escorts, but she suffered a critical failure of her jump drive and had to land on the backwater world of Arunisiir for repairs. The convoy carried on without her, leaving a single Gazelle-class escort in orbit to watch over the grounded *Martin II*. As information can only travel as fast as the ship that carries it, it may take several weeks for rumours of the Treasure Ship to reach the pirates.

The news disseminates out from Arunisiir at a rate of 3 parsecs/week, roughly. So, if the pirates are in the Borderlands subsector, they hear of the grounded ship within two weeks; if they are in Tliowaha, it takes another week or two for news to reach them.

RUMOURS AND LIES

All the stories start out the same way – one of the fabled Imperial Treasure Ships broke down and landed on Arunisiir.

The rumours on the opposite page can be obtained in any starport bar or pirate den with a successful Streetwise check (1D days, INT). Note that not all the rumours are actually true…

Roll a number of times equal to the Effect of the check to determine how many rumours the pirates pick up. The pirates can keep searching for rumours (or analysing news stories, which amounts to the same thing) if they wish, but each additional search takes 1D days.

The pirates can also pick up rumours at Arunisiir docks once they arrive, at only 1D hours per Streetwise check.

GETTING TO ARUNISIIR

Depending on when and where the pirates receive the rumour, it may take them several weeks to reach Arunisiir in the Borderlands subsector.

Eight weeks after the *Martin II* lands, the rescue flotilla arrives at Arunisiir (see page 76 for details on the flotilla).

Twelve weeks after she lands, the repaired *Martin II* launches again and jumps for Tech-World (see page 58). If the pirates do not arrive within this time limit, their chances of intercepting the Treasure Ship are extremely remote.

ARRIVAL AT ARUNISIIR

Arunisiir (see *The Trojan Reach* page 187) has few of its own ships. Waiting in orbit, however, is the Gazelle-class escort Arshad. Remember to check the pirates' Standing with the Imperium – if their Standing is -6 or less, and the Arshad identifies them, it will attack. The pirates can hide their identity from the Arshad with a successful opposed Electronics (sensors) check (EDU).

Arunisiir is a lawless world – once past the Imperial patrol, the pirates can land anywhere they want, although landing too close to the *Martin II* attracts unwanted attention.

ARUNISIIR STARPORT

Arunisiir's Class B port consists of a few square kilometres of packed pseudogranite landing pads surrounding a knot of buildings. The Aslan invaders destroyed the old traffic control building. Today, the hulk of an Aslan Sakhai-class assault carrier serves as the heart of the port. Surrounding it are a dozen missile turrets – while Arunisiir is officially TL6, it retains a few high-tech industries and can produce surface-to-space missiles.

Six ships occupy pads in the starport.

- **The *Martin II* Treasure Ship:** The Treasure Ship occupies a pad on the edge of the StarPort. Access to the ship is strictly controlled (see Security Precautions, below). She obviously landed badly – her stern is supported by grav platforms, and her impact cracked the granite pad underneath. Scaffolding surrounds the damaged ship.

Rumours and Lies

11	An explosion forced the *Martin II* to land.	41	Captain Torsa of the *Martin II* is a marionette who got his position through family connections.
12	Her engineering section is damaged.	42	The first officer, Jagad, of the *Martin II* is a Naval veteran who favours other veterans.
13	Her chief engineer was killed.	43	The second engineer, Polo, is very superstitious.
14	All the engineering staff were killed.	44	The commander of the marine detachment, Harc, is a cyborg.
15	The ship's jump drive is damaged.	45	The ship's navigator, Osha, comes from the Reach.
16	The Imperium is sending a repair crew to fix the ship.	46	Tech-World is a lair of spies and strange creatures. Be on your guard there.
21	She'll never jump again.	51	All Treasure Ships carry a squad of Imperial Marines on board.
22	She was attacked by pirates.	52	All Treasure Ships have a built-in self-destruct device.
23	The ship is guarded by a single Gazelle.	53	The vault on a Treasure Ship can only be opened when the ship arrives at its destination.
24	She's unguarded.	54	The captain has a key that opens the vault.
25	The Imperium is sending another three ships to escort the *Martin II*.	55	The vault on a Treasure Ship is locked using an unbreakable mathematical code derived from stellar positions and jump data.
26	The rescue flotilla arrives in eight weeks.	56	The vault is unbreakable.
31	Every Treasure Ship carries valuable goods.	61	The Treasure Ship's route goes through Tech-World and Byrni.
32	The *Martin II* carries a secret treaty on board.	62	The Treasure Ship's route goes through Exe, Falcon and Byrni.
33	The *Martin II* carries bioweapons on board.	63	This rumour gets the pirates the ship data (page 63) of the *Martin II*.
34	The *Martin II* carries an Ancient artefact on board.	64	This rumour gets the pirates the deck plans of the *Martin II*.
35	The *Martin II* has a consignment of gemstones on board.	65	This rumour gets the pirates the crew manifest of the *Martin II*.
36	The *Martin II* is a relatively small and unimportant ship.	66	The *Martin II* was sabotaged.

- **Far Trader *Fafnir*:** An Imperium-registered independent trader, owned by a husband-and wife team called Hral and Gila Zafnen. They dabbled in piracy in the past, and were drawn here by the same rumours as the Travellers. However, they have learned the vault on the Treasure Ship is impenetrable, and have given up on their grand schemes of robbing the *Martin II.*

- **Imperial Scout Service Ship (Type S) *Whistlestop*:** This ship, crewed by an eccentric scout called Yan and his robot sidekick Bucket, served as a courier for the downed *Martin II*. Yan jumped back to the Imperium, informed the naval office at Fist about the crash of the Treasure Ship, then returned to Arunisiir. He sees himself as the hero of the hour, and can be found in the starport bar being bought drinks by the grateful crew of the *Martin II.*

- **Far Trader *Hopeful Wanderer*:** The Hopeful Wanderer, out of Acrid, is a fixture of shipping and trade in this subsector. If the pirates befriend her captain, a woman named Bel, she tells them that she spotted Hroal Irontooth's flagship lurking in the Exe asteroid belt (see Exe, page 58).

- **Arunisiir Defence Force Ships *Tiger* and *Lion*:** Arunisiir's home-grown ships are a mismatch of TL6 human technology and a few bits of scavenged TL12 Aslan tech – they look like eggs with grav drives. They are lightly armed and no match for a modern vessel (no armour and a single pulse laser each), but still bravely challenge any intruders.

ENCOUNTERS AT THE STARPORT

Timing on these events is left deliberately loose, but they happen in the following order.

Aslan Extortion: Arunisiir is a human-dominated world, but the aristocracy are descendants of Aslan conquerors who landed some three hundred years ago. The Aslan are figureheads now, kept as pampered pets by their human retainers. Sometimes, though, the Aslan remember a little of their former pride, and act out.

The pirates are approached by an angry Aslan male named Ekaft. He tells them their ship has landed in his territory, and that they must pay him a fee based on the value of the ship – a value he will determine personally by inspecting it. If the pirates refuse, then Ekaft threatens to have them thrown off the planet. It is largely an empty threat, but Ekaft can draw unwanted attention to the pirates.

If they accept, then Ekaft demands a nominal payment (Cr100 per ton).

- The main purpose of this scene is local colour, but can also lead into local politics (see *The Trojan Reach* page 187).
- Technically, the *Martin II's* landing pad is also in Ekaft's territory. He lacks the confidence to demand payment from the Imperium, but if the Travellers feed his ego, they can convince him to demand an inspection of the Treasure Ship – this is a possible route for the Travellers to get onto the *Martin II.*

Wild Times at the Arunisiir Bar: Crew from the *Martin II*, the orbiting Arshad and the other ships at the starport crowd the bar. The locals at Arunisiir welcome the extra customers – Arunisiir is off the regular trade route. While at the bar, a successful Routine (6+) Carouse check lets the pirates befriend Crewmen O'Leary & Ilin from the Treasure Ship. This pair of hard-drinking rogues may tell the Travellers their ship is looking for extra hands, or even smuggle the Travellers on board for a nice bribe.

- The bar is an excellent place to pick up rumours or introduce NPCs.
- If the Travellers are stuck, then have Mechanic Polo approach them and offer them a job.

The GeDeCo Man: If the pirates are still hesitant about approaching the *Martin II*, then have them run into a strange offworlder in the starport. Aparo claims to be a passenger on the Hopeful Wanderer, and mentions that the *Martin II* is looking for qualified engineers. He is a broker in spare parts – if the pirates would do him a small favour, he will reward them with a Cr1000 bonus. All he wants is a report on the status of the *Martin II*'s engines.

Aparo works for the General Development Company; he is here to ascertain whether or not their plan is still viable. He wants to use the Travellers to check on the engines so he does not draw attention to the two GeDeCO agents already on board.

- If questioned, Aparo claims he has replacement engine parts in his cargo space on the Hopeful Wanderer, and wants to find out how extortionate a margin he can charge.
- Investigation reveals that Aparo joined the Hopeful Wanderer on Tech-World. Breaking into Aparo's cabin, questioning Captain Bel or hacking into Aparo's hand computer reveals that he is renting a warehouse in the starport under the name CP Computing.

The Buzz of the Scout: A refitted scout (stripping out staterooms for extra fuel and cargo space) buzzes the starport, dodging past the vigilant Arshad to make a fast pass over Arunisiir before jumping out again. This scout belongs to the pirate retinue of Hroal Irontooth, and is here to check on his prize's status. Irontooth expected the *Martin II* to jump into his trap weeks ago.

- A successful Difficult (10+) Electronics (comms) check (INT) lets the Travellers detect a burst transmission from the *Martin II* to the scoutship. This is an encrypted report from Henshaw, telling Hroal about the explosion and asking him to be patient.
- If the pirates visited Theev (in Honour Among Thieves or some other adventure), then a successful Electronics (sensors) check (INT) may let them recognise the scout ship as the Dancing Spider, a ship belonging to Hroal Irontooth's band of pirates (see Hroal Irontooth, page 59).
- If the Travellers intercept the scout and parlay with her captain, Thedik Vance, he may inform them about Hroal's plan to capture the *Martin II.*

The Imperial Cavalry: Three more ships jump into the Arunisiir system – the *Gazelle-class Komino,* the repair ship *Henry Ford* (see *Ships of the Reach* page 29) and the patrol cruiser *Sincerity.* The Komino takes up a defensive posture alongside her sister Arshad, while the Henry Ford descends to carry out final repairs to the *Martin II*. The Sincerity overflies the port (see below) before landing to refuel.

Within 48 hours, the competent engineers of the *Henry Ford* have the *Martin II* ready to take off again. After refuelling, the Ford heads coreward again. The *Martin II* joins the two Gazelles in orbit, ready for her voyage to the Hierate.

The *Sincerity* is on a pirate hunting mission. Before landing to refuel, she scans every ship in the port. If the players have a Standing with the Imperium of -6 or less, they again need to disguise their ship or else hide to avoid arrest. The *Sincerity* has better sensors than the *Arshad,* so the Travellers need to make the Electronics (sensors) check at DM-4 to hide if they stay berthed at the starport.

The *Sincerity's* pirate patrol takes her through the Borderlands trade route and then out along the Sindalian main – the Tracvellers may run into her again on some future adventure.

GETTING ON BOARD

There are three ways to get on board the *Martin II.*

Getting Hired: While the ship's grounded on Arunisiir, they need deckhands and technicians to clear out the damaged sections of engineering and repair cracks in the ship's armour. Any Travellers with the requisite skills (Engineer 2+, Mechanic 2+, or appropriate Profession 2+) can get a job on the repair crew (earning Effect x Cr200).

- Repair crew workers are restricted to the engineering section, and cannot explore the rest of the ship. They are watched at all time by two armoured marines.
- Any repair workers that impress the officers (through roleplaying, or by having useful skills like Engineer, Electronics or Gunnery, and who have clean records (or suitable fake IDs) can bargain their way into temporary contracts for the duration of the voyage to the Hierate.

Stealth: Sneaking onto the ship is tricky. All approaches are watched by armoured marines, and large signs warn that they are under orders to shoot to kill. A successful Very Difficult (12+) Stealth check (DEX) is needed to make it past the guards.

- Once on board, the Travellers can easily hide in the cargo bays, which are only rarely checked during flight.
- It is much easier for a member of the repair crew to slip away and hide, requiring a Routine (6+) Stealth check.

Raiding: If the Travellers want to abandon subtlety, they can just tool up with armour and laser rifles and try to storm the ship. The *Martin II* is protected by six Imperial Star Marines and all of her crew have at least basic training in firearms. The local authorities also respond within minutes, sending ground cars full of troops armed with slug rifles. On top of all that, thereis the Arshad in orbit with her ortillery missiles and assault launch. A direct assault on the *Martin II* is likely to be suicidal.

- That said, a small strike team might be able to sneak on board and then either storm the bridge or try to break into the vault, especially if backed up by a distraction.

2. VOYAGE TO THE HIERATE

The *Martin II* clambers out of Arunisiir's gravity well, and takes her place between the two Gazelles. The Treasure Ship is obviously still damaged; she handles like a drowning cow and the fresh paint on her aft cannot hide all the scars. A good captain would turn around and head for a proper drydock in Imperial space, but Captain Torsa is determined to see his mission through.

With her range restricted to two-parsec jumps, the *Martin II* and her two escorts pass through seven systems en route to the Hierate. In each system, unless otherwise noted, the three ships land at the starport, refuel, and then jump out again as soon as possible. On average, the *Martin II* spends three days at each port and another seven days in jump space, so the voyage takes around 70 days.

Following the Flotilla: If the Travellers have their own ship(s), they can try following the *Martin II* across the subsector. Following the same course as the flotilla for one or two jumps does not arouse suspicion, although the pirates may be hailed by the *Martin II* or her escorts – it is standard practice to greet one's fellow Travellers.

Following the flotilla for three or more jumps, though, is suspect behaviour. Unless the Travellers come up with a plausible excuse to explain why they are sticking so close to the *Martin II,* they may be intercepted and boarded by the *Arshad.*

Alternatively, the pirates can stalk the *Martin II* from a distance, jumping into a different part of the system and then picking up the Treasure Ship on long-range sensors.

ACRID

Acrid's caustic atmosphere can eat through an inch of armour plating in only a few hours, and acid storms and methane hurricanes lash the arid surface constantly, but it is still one of the more pleasant worlds visited en route to the Hierate. The population here is only a few thousand, clustered around the settlement on Sentinel Mount, the tallest mountain on the planet.

Weather control systems open a landing corridor for the *Martin II* and her escorts to land. This corridor is an unnaturally calm column within the raging storms.

- Daring pirates can attack while the ships are in the landing corridor. Moving outside the safe corridor means exposure to the violent winds of Acrid (which gives DM-4 to Pilot checks). The corridor is relatively narrow, constraining the movements of ships within it. The pirates have a chance to take on one Gazelle at a time instead of both at once.
- Attacking within the corridor means exposure to Acrid's four automated missile turrets.

EXE

Hroal Irontooth's pirate band lurk on the fringes of this system, waiting for the hijacked *Martin II* to jump into their midst. Hroal's band consists of:

- His flagship, the *Meatgrinder,* a 1,200 ton Aslan *Halaheike*-class pocket warship.
- The *Monkey Business*, a 300-ton *Bug*-class salvage hauler with four pulse lasers and a particle beam turret, piloted by the uplifted ape Pirate George.
- The refitted Far Trader *Sindal's Shame,* fitted with a missile/sandcaster turret and twin pulse laser turret.
- The scout ship *Dancing Spider.*

IRONTOOTH'S AMBUSH

If Hroal's plan works and the *Martin II* jumps into his trap, then the Treasure Ship is in big trouble. She is outgunned several times over by the *Meatgrinder* alone, whose twin particle bays can punch through even the *Martin II's* armour. Unless the Travellers intervene, the *Martin II* is pummelled until she is drifting in space. The Aslan's forces then board the Treasure Ship and fight a bloody battle with the surviving marines. Hroal has no way to loot the vault, but he will steal the cargo and leave the carcass to be picked over by scavengers like the Travellers.

The *Martin II* appears some 45,000,000 kilometres from the rest of the flotilla; it takes the two Gazelles the best part of a day to respond. By then, the ship is dead and drifting, but the vault is still intact. The *Komino* jumps out to bring word of the disaster back to the Imperium, while the Arshad tows the hulk to Exe. The pirates still have a chance to get the loot if they can find a way to break into the vault.

Purser Vaughan (see page 72) tries to get the fake treaty into the vault, or else plants it somewhere the Travellers find it.

If the Travellers are on board, then they will be killed unless they can come up with a way to outwit Hroal or (more likely) change sides and form an alliance with Hroal.

Hroal Irontooth

The Aslan criminal is perhaps the most aggressive and daring of the Theev pirates. The pirates may have encountered him during *Honour Among Thieves* – if not, they quickly learn that he is loud, aggressive and dangerous.

The pirates may be able to come to an agreement with Irontooth to split the treasure from the *Martin II* or form an alliance. Hroal expected that the captain of the *Martin II* would be able to open the vault. He was wrong, so he needs the Travellers' help to get into the vault. Once they have served their purpose, he may honour his alliance or just eliminate them depending on his mood.

THE BATTLE OF EXE

If Hroal's plan does not work, and the *Martin II* arrives safely at Exe, then Hroal Irontooth switches to Plan B. His band outguns the two Gazelles, so he leads a direct assault on Exe, hoping to capture the *Martin II* by sheer force of arms.

It is a bloody battle. The Gazelles are armed with nuclear missiles, and the *Meatgrinder* takes the bulk of the punishment. Hroal's smaller ships dance around the fringes of the battle, trying to score a lucky hit on the *Martin II*'s fuel tanks to stop her jumping out. The Gazelles keep the majority of their fire targeted on the Aslan ship, but the *Martin's* sixteen beam lasers are enough to dissuade most attackers from coming too close.

As the *Meatgrinder* approaches, she launches her ten fighters. Swarmed by these interceptors, the *Arshad* chooses to take a more aggressive approach. Leaving the *Komino* to guard the *Martin II*, she heads at full speed towards the *Meatgrinder*. Twin particle bays flare again and again, blasting the *Arshad's* prow to scrap, breaching her hull, destroying her weapons turrets – but the hulk keeps coming, and even in her ruined state, she is faster and more manoeuvrable than the *Meatgrinder*.

Hroal jumps out. The wreck of the burning *Arshad* tumbles through the empty space where the pirate ship was seconds ago.

With the loss of a big ship on both sides, the odds turn against the pirates. The *Komino's* nukes destroy *Sindal's Shame*. The *Monkey Business* retrieves six of the fighters, then jumps out, followed instantly by the *Dancing Spider*. The Imperial forces are victorious – but both ships have suffered heavy damage. The *Komino* is down to Hull 82 and has lost both beam turrets, while the *Martin II* is at Hull 402.

TECH-WORLD

After the carnage of Exe, Tech-World's cool mechanical embrace is a welcome relief. The *Martin II* docks here for repairs if necessary, and the crew are given an extra three days' shore leave.

While on Tech-World, Navigator Osha leaves the ship carrying the GeDeCo black box concealed in her backpack. Guided by her personal robot, she goes to a warehouse rented by a corporation called CP Computing. The Travellers can follow her with Streetwise or Stealth.

Investigating with an Admin or Electronics (computers) check (INT) reveals CP Computing is a fake company – it is a shell created by GeDeCo. The warehouse contains a super-advanced TL15 dedicated supercomputer built by the engineers of Tech-World for CP Computing, designed specifically to crack the vault lock.

An android named Virgil oversees the computer. It refuses to divulge its employers (optionally – the computer determines that it needs Captain Torsa's genetic data to crack the vault code, so Virgil or Osha hire the Travellers to steal a sample of Torsa's blood before the *Martin II* leaves Tech-World.)

Before the *Martin II* leaves Tech-World, Virgil sends a package to Purser Vaughan containing a small device. Activating this device opens the Treasure Ship vault.

ERGO

Ergo's a Red system, so the *Martin II* visits only the automated refuelling station before departing. Ergo is one of the last chances for the pirates to intercept the Treasure Ship before Byrni.

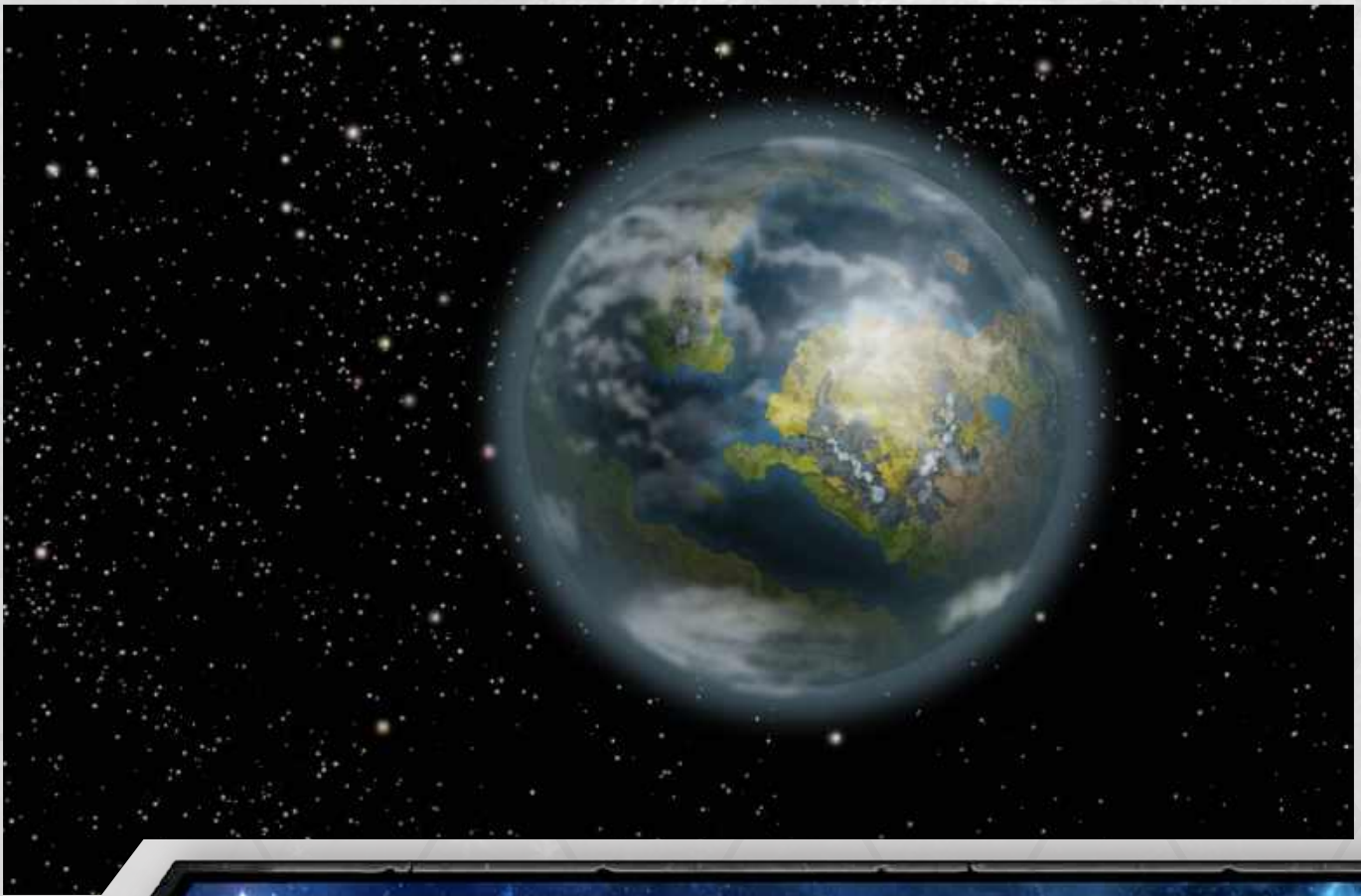
BYRNI

When the old Empire of Sindal fell, it left outposts and colonies across the Trojan Reach. Some – like Drinax – survived and thrived for a few generations. Others collapsed into barbarism or decayed into dust.

Byrni fossified. The system was a major naval base before the Empire fell, and it stayed a naval base after the Empire fell. Even as the planet's technological base declined, the stalwart sailors of Bynri kept their ships flying. Loyalty to the memory of empire became the highest virtue in their society.

Now, the Aslan and Humans of Byrni are brave defenders of civilisation and trade in the Trojan Reach. Massive investments by GeDeCo rebuilt their crumbling infrastructure and upgraded their aging ships. Byrni patrols guard against pirate attacks along the Imperium-Hierate and Imperium-Florian League trade routes.

Byrni Patrols: The Byrni patrol consists of three Systems Defence Boats (see High Guard, page 124); a second patrol of another three boats is only 20,000 kilometres away.



The GeDeCo Plot: The final section of the GeDeCo scheme to plant the fake treaty comes into play in Byrni. The corporation influences the Regent of Byrni to order all ships passing through the system to be searched for contraband. Captain Torsa grumbles, but allows the inspection. The ship's vault will, of course, remain sealed.

A Byrni patrol vessel docks with the *Martin II*, and a team of Byrni marines, wearing the antique armour of the Star Guard of Sindal, board the ship. Notably, all the marines wear communications headsets that transmit all they see and hear back to their home base. They conduct a thorough inspection of all the holds, and then come to the vault. Surreptitiously, Purser Vaughan activates the control device obtained on Tech-World.

The doors of the vault swing open. The Byrni marines enter, over the objections of the Imperial officers present. Purser Vaughan is one of several Imperial crew who enter the vault to remonstrate with the Byrni soldiers. In the confusion, he puts the fake treaty on a shelf in the vault.

One of the Byrni marines is under orders from GeDeCo to look for any official documents, and she spots the treaty. If she picks it up, then her headset will immediately transmit an image of it back to Byrni – and once it is transmitted, there will be no way to hide it.

- If the Travellers are on the *Martin II*, they may be in a position to spot Vaughan planting the treaty.
- They can also try stopping the Byrni marines.

After the vault is opened, tensions between the Byrni ships and the Imperial convoy are high. A shooting battle could easily break out, if the Travellers push the situation one way or another. If the Travellers do not intervene, then Captain Torsa decides to continue with the mission. The 'malfunction' of the vault is a disaster, but it is not his fault – he will deliver the contents of the vault to the Aslan as ordered. He orders one of the remaining Gazelle escorts, if any, to jump back towards the Imperium at high speed to warn them about the opening of the vault.

SINK

At Sink, the *Martin II* is met by an Aslan escort flotilla consisting of an Aositaoh-class 1,000-ton cruiser and two 800-ton Ekawsiykua escorts. That is considerably more firepower than the Travellers are likely to be able to deal with. The Travellers have a small final window of opportunity to rob the Treasure Ship before it joins up with the Aslan ships. If they fail, the prize is lost.

The Treaty of Fist

GeDeCo's forgers did an excellent job – the treaty is identical to a genuine Imperial treaty, right down to the genetically-coded seals affixed next to each signature. According to the Treaty, the Aslan claim the right to annex any worlds in the subsectors of Dpres, Sindal, Tliowaha or the Borderland, on condition they do not take any planet within six parsecs of the Imperial frontier. In exchange for not protesting these territorial claims, the Imperium is granted favourable trade terms.

Currently, the independent worlds of the Trojan Reach look to the Imperium for protection. The independents have no love for the Imperium, but believe the Imperium will contest any large-scale advance by the Aslan to protect its own borders. The Trojan Reach's status as a buffer zone between the two star empires is a major factor in interstellar politics. The treaty strips away that status, casting hundreds of human worlds into the maw of the Aslan in exchange for profit.

Such a treaty would not only panic the independent worlds and drive them into the embrace of the General Development Company, it would also stir up the anti-Aslan, pro-military factions within the Imperial nobility. Currently, Imperial politics is divided on the Aslan question, but the treaty would be seen by those opposed to the Aslan as a massive, unconscionable step towards abandoning the Reach.

If word of the treaty spreads out into the Trojan Reach, then every independent world will start looking for allies and support.

The revelation of the Treaty would not only help GeDeCo – it would also benefit the dreams of Drinax. If the Travellers allow the treaty to spread, then roll 2D for every independent world visited by them. On an 8+, that world moves one step closer to Haven. However, revealing the treaty also raises tensions with both the Imperium and the Hierate, dropping the players' Standing by 1D with regards to both empires.

3. THE TREASURE SHIP

There are few ships in Charted Space as distinctive – or as ugly – as a Treasure Ship. The basic design is a venerable one; the earliest Treasure Ships were built in the First Imperium as an expression of the Empire's power. Treasure Ships were a way of impressing petty kings to encourage them to join the Imperium, or to haul away their wealth in safety. They are still used today out of tradition. Poets compare the ship's external profile to a castle, or a turtle, or a mountain of crystaliron, but the most accurate metaphor is that the Treasure Ship is a fist – a big metal fist clenched tight around the Empire's wealth.

The ship barely qualifies as streamlined. It can enter a planet's atmosphere, supported by its vestigial lifting surfaces and overworked grav-plates, but it does not so much fly as fall in roughly the right direction. The prow of the ship is hinged, allowing access to the cavernous cargo bay. 300 tons of cargo space is unsecured, but the huge secure vault contains another 60 tons of space at the heart of the ship.

The vault is the reason the Treasure Ship exists. Even if an attacker punched through the ship's thick armour and reinforced hull, the vault is tough enough to withstand direct hits from starship weapons. Anything powerful enough to crack the vault would instantly incinerate anything inside. Some vaults even have psionic shielding that block teleportation. The vault's locking mechanism is virtually unbreakable. The locking code is derived from jump space co-ordinates and genetic material, so it can only be opened in the right system by the right person.

Atop the vault and the cargo section are the crew decks. In addition to engineers, pilots and gunners, every Treasure Ship carries a squad of Imperial Marines equipped with sufficient firepower to turn back any boarding parties. Conditions on board ship are cramped but comfortable. As Treasure Ships are part of Imperial diplomacy, the interior is richly decorated and the public sections can be reconfigured into a conference venue or ceremonial audience chamber. The officers' decks and flight deck are at the top of the 'fist'. An escape launch nestles between rows of laser turrets.

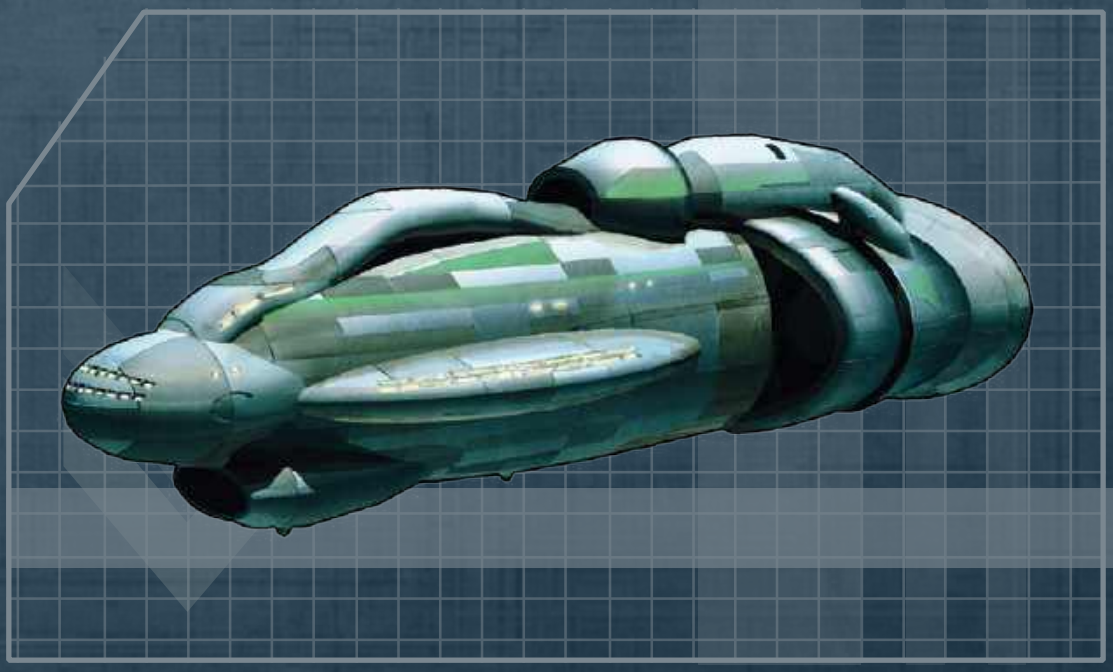
Aft are the ship's huge fuel tanks. Treasure Ships are ungainly, but capable of three-parsec jumps. The engineering deck is at the tail of the ship, under the fuel tanks. The ship's second escape launch is also in the rear section, along with two more turrets.

Flying a Treasure Ship is like strapping an m-drive on a bank. Everything is massively heavy and unwieldy, there are security checks and alarms everywhere, and while parts of the ship are magnificently appointed to impress visitors, other sections are cramped and crowded. Everyone knows that the ship has a giant bullseye painted on it, and that every pirate and petty kingdom in the Trojan Reach wants to kill them and take their stuff.

IMPERIAL TREASURE SHIP

TL12		TONS	COST (MCr)
Hull	1,600 tons, Streamlined, Reinforced	-	144
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour 8	160	57.6
M-Drive	Thrust 1	16	32
J-Drive	Jump 3	125	187.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 570	38	38
Fuel Tanks	J-3, 4 weeks of operation	484	-
Bridge		40	8
Computer	Computer/15	-	2
Sensors	Military Grade	2	4.1
Weapons	Double Turrets (beam lasers) x 8	8	12
Systems	Fuel Scoops	-	1
	Loading Belt (TL12) x 4	4	0.04
	Armoury	2	0.5
	Vault	120	60
	Docking Space (20 tons) x 2	44	11
	Launch x 2	-	11.214
	Cargo Crane	4	4
Staterooms	Standard x 20	80	10
	Barracks x 8	16	08
Software	Manoeuvre/0	-	-
	Jump Control/3	-	0.3
	Library	-	-
Common Areas		28	2.8
Cargo		429	-

TOTAL: 585.85



704
HULL POINTS

CREW

CAPTAIN, PILOT, ASTROGATOR, ENGINEERS X 5, MAINTENANCE X 2, MEDIC, GUNNER X 8, MARINES X 8

RUNNING COSTS

MAINTENANCE COST
Cr48821/month

PURCHASE COST
MCr585.85

POWER REQUIRMENTS

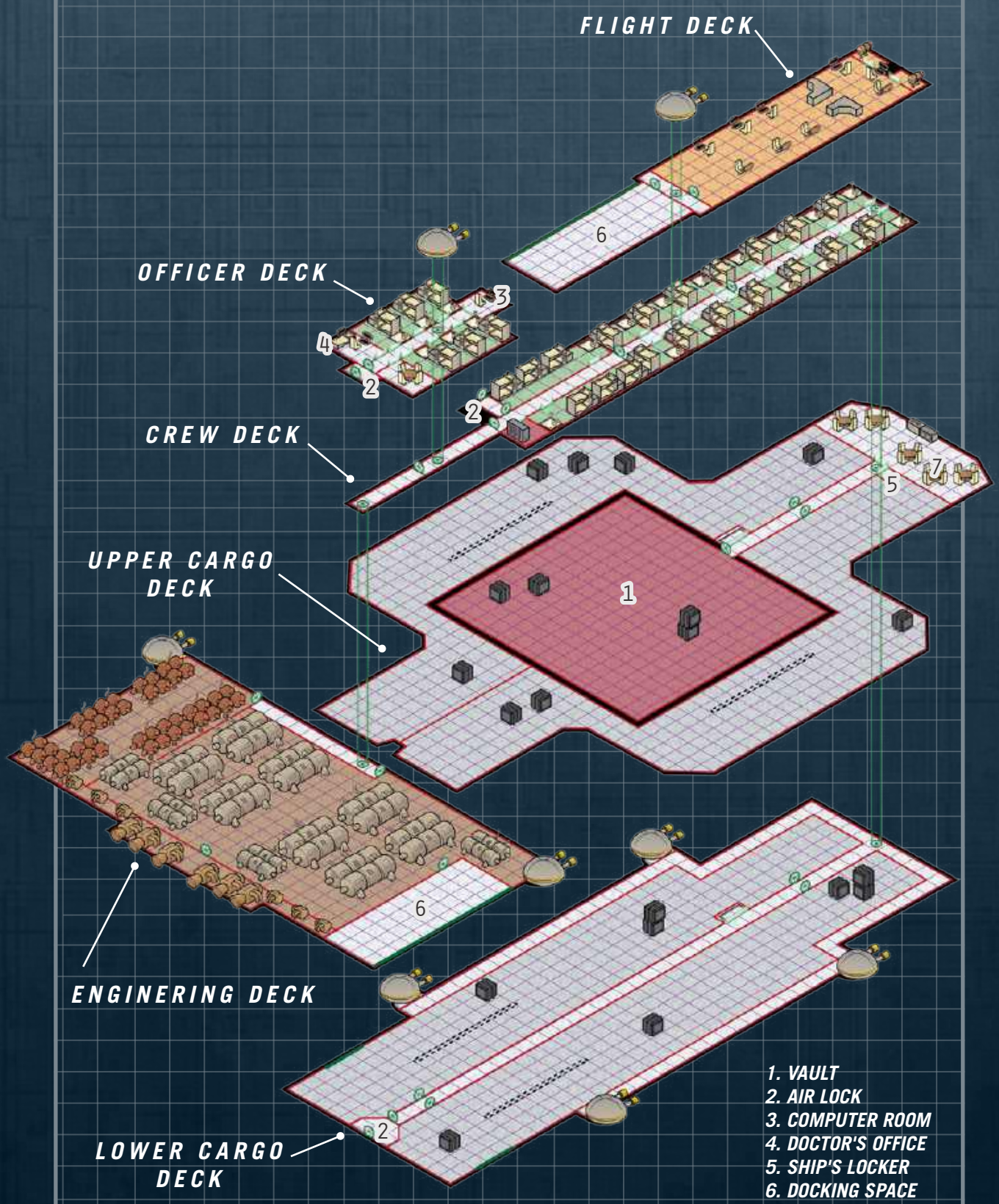
160
MANOEUVRE DRIVE

320
BASIC SHIP SYSTEMS

480
JUMP DRIVE

2
SENSORS

72
WEAPONS


FLIGHT DECK
OFFICER DECK
CREW DECK
UPPER CARGO DECK
ENGINERING DECK
LOWER CARGO DECK
1. VAULT
2. AIR LOCK
3. COMPUTER ROOM
4. DOCTOR'S OFFICE
5. SHIP'S LOCKER
6. DOCKING SPACE
7. GALLEY

Lower Cargo Deck

The Lower Cargo Deck is unoccupied during flight. A stowaway – or even a group of stowaways – could hide here in the cargo holds if they can avoid the security systems (see page 76). This deck smells of oil and burnt electrical wiring, and is poorly lit. These are the bowels of the ship, crammed with junk and spare parts. The hard landing on Arunisiir damaged many of the light fittings in the hold, so the illumination flickers and dies at random.

Cargo Hatches: These large hatches can be over-ridden from outside with a Very Difficult (12+) Mechanic check (DEX). They only open in atmosphere.

Ventral Airlock: The ship's grav plating does not extend to this airlock. It is mainly used for maintenance and docking with smaller spacecraft.

Cargo Lift: This grav lift connects to the vault entrance above. It is locked down during flight, but this security measure can be bypassed by an Electronics (computers) check (INT).

Port Cargo Hold: This cargo bay is packed full of 120 tons of dust spice (Cr6000/ton) destined for the Aslan market. The crates are stamped with the Imperial sunburst, but the spice itself is untraceable if moved to less ostentatious containers. Like its starboard counterpart, this hold extends into the deck above.

Starboard Cargo Hold: This hold contains 100 tons of Advanced Electronics and Advanced Manufactured Goods (both Cr100000/ton). These items were constructed either in Tobia subsector or deeper within the Imperium. The components are all highly specialised and marked on a molecular level with radiotracers and serial codes, making them hot goods that must be sold through a fence.

Laser Turret: Each turret has a pair of beam lasers manually controlled from a firing station. The *Martin II* is lightly armed for its size, relying on its escort ships for protection.

Engineering Deck

The whole engineering deck bears the scars of the explosion that crippled the ship. There was a leak of high-pressure hydrogen that blasted through a pipe and expanded into the engineering section. Most of the crew were killed by flying debris, the sudden increase in cabin pressure, or secondary explosions as hydrogen combusted with oxygen in the atmosphere. The rest were killed when automatic safety systems opened the launch bay airlock, venting the atmosphere and saving the rest of the ship. While the crew were able to repair the ship enough to get it to Arunisiir, it is something of a miracle the disaster did not cause more damage.

The narrow, cramped corridors of engineering were unpleasant and oily even before the disaster – now any part of the engine might be smeared with blood or bone fragments, and every surface bears the signs of abrasions and explosion damage. The explosion was centred on the jump drive; the power plant and m-drive are mostly intact.

Jump Drive: The jump drive was sabotaged by mechanic Felmar (see page 52). He caused the failure that resulted in the ship landing on Arunisiir.

- The jump drive is severely damaged. It can be repaired by a Traveller with Mechanic 2 or Engineer (jump) 2 and several days' work, but the *Martin II* lacks the replacement parts. New parts can be salvaged from another jump-capable ship, or delivered by the rescue flotilla.
- A successful Engineer (jump) check (INT) lets a Traveller determine the cause of the disaster. From the looks of it, the safety interlocks were disabled and the jump sequence halted at the last second. Instead of pumping nearly 500 tons of hydrogen into the singularity, the hydrogen vented into the engineering compartment. Anyone standing near the jump engine must have been killed instantly.
- A successful Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers), Engineer (jump), or Astrogation check (INT) lets the pirates discover something strange in the jump drive's memory buffers. It looks like someone tampered with the navigation data. It is impossible to tell exactly how, but someone tried to manually change the ship's destination by altering the jump solution – which is like trying to change a plane's destination by hammering its rudder out of shape while it is accelerating down the runway.

Power Plant: The only survivors in the engineering section were both working on the power plant when the disaster hit. They made it to a survival locker just before the atmosphere was vented.

Escape Launch: This is the launch piloted by Hanshaw. She was in the launch when the explosion happened – see page 74.

Laser Turret: The engineering crew used these turrets as a private recreation booth, as the scattered debris bears witness to. Searching through the junk turns up items like cigarettes, empty alcohol bottles, pornographic holos – and a credit chit belonging to Mechanic Talis (see page 68), who used the port turret for a sexual rendezvous with Felmar.

Upper Cargo Deck

The upper cargo deck is where the crew gather most frequently. The galley and the port cargo deck are the centre of socialising when the ship is in flight. The crew mostly ignore the monolithic black secure vault that dominates this section.

Vault Entrance: The only way into the vault is via this titanic hatch. The hatch is made out of the same material as the vault – an exotic form of bonded superdense material. The locks and grav-plates that hold the door shut are all contained inside the vault walls. A golden Imperial seal marks the entrance. If the right person (based on the genetic code programmed into the vault) inserts the right key (a ceremonial key kept in the captain's safe) at the right time (when the ship is in the Tyokh system), the vault opens.

Examining the vault with a successful Difficult (10+) Electronics (sensors) check (INT) reveals a microscopic data tap attached to the connection between the vault and the ship's navigation computer. Further investigation turns up a mysterious black box attached to the inside of the navigation computer (see Tech-World, page 60).

Vault: The treasure vault on board the *Martin II* contains:

- Four 5-ton mail drums of secure electronic communications between the Imperium and the Hierate. Cracking the encryption on these drums requires an Impossible (16+) Electronics (computers) check.
- Various legal documents relating to Imperial diplomacy and mercantile ventures in the Hierate. If the GeDeCo plan to plant a fake treaty goes ahead, it will be found amid these documents. These documents can be used to introduce future heists and plots, or just sold or ransomed back to the Imperium for MCr10.
- 40 tons of Luxury Goods (Cr200000 each).
- 20 tons of Pharmaceuticals (Cr100000 each).
- 20 tons of Radioactives (MCr1 each).
- Gemstones and other rare items of negligible mass worth another MCr30.

Upper Port Cargo Deck: This walkway overlooks the lower port hold. The crew's personal cargo and ship supplies like food, water and other essentials are stored here.

Upper Starboard Cargo Deck: The entrance to this hold is locked.

5. Galley: The ship's small but well-equipped galley is a popular place for the crew to relax.

Ship's Locker. A locked metal crate in the locker contains eight stunners and twenty snub pistols, plus ammunition. There are also various forms of vacc suit and flak jackets.

Crew Deck

The crew deck is the most heavily populated part of the ship.

Staterooms: Most of the staterooms on this level are double occupancy. All staterooms are kept locked when unoccupied.

Marine Barracks: This is home to the *Martin II*'s marine team. Commander Harc has a private stateroom; his six subordinates all share their quarters. The marines stay aloof from the rest of the crew.

Marine Armoury: The marines keep their battle dress and other weapons in this locked chamber.

Airlock: This airlock is used for boarding actions and close-range space combat exercises.

Officer's Deck

The small officers' deck is off-limits to most of the crew – Captain Torsa maintains a strict social hierarchy on board the ship.

Staterooms: Most officers have private staterooms. Junior officers are obliged to share rooms. There are two empty staterooms on this deck, which are reserved for ambassadors and other dignitaries.

Computer Room: The *Martin II*'s computer is small and outdated, but copes with the relatively undemanding mission profile required of a Treasure Ship. The second officer is stationed here, working on the ship's paperwork. Purser Vaughan also works from this room.

Conference Room: Also used as a dining room for senior officers. The ship's safe is in this room; it contains MCr5 in credits.

Doctor's office: This small office is locked following the death of the ship's doctor. Until a new doctor is hired, the autodoc cares for the crew's medical problems.

Airlock

Laser Turret: Captain Torsa demands regular battle-drills when the ship is in flight; this is one of the few occasions when crewmen are allowed onto this deck to man the turrets.

Flight Deck

Bridge: The ship's comfortable and well-appointed bridge is manned at all times, even in jump space.

Escape Launch

Laser Turret

CREW ROSTER

Individuals marked with * were killed in the 'accident' that forced the ship to land on Arunisiir. Some have longer descriptions after this summary.

Flight

- Captain Torsa
- First Officer Jagad
- Second Officer Halbinar: Harried and overworked, Halbinar deals with the ship's logistics in concert with the cargo chief. She remains on Arunisiir after the ship departs to deal with the aftermath of the explosion and subsequent repair work. She is brusque, efficient and prone to space-sickness.
- Astrogator Osha
- Assistant Astrogator Ven Laffit: The young assistant navigator is on his first tour of duty. Tobia-born, he is a firm believer in the superiority of the Imperium, and loudly advocates punitive war with the Aslan instead of the current policy of appeasement. Torsa plans to keep him well away from any diplomats when the *Martin II* reaches Tyokh.
- Lead Pilot Smith: The ship's chief pilot is a conservative naval officer on the verge of retirement. He knows Borderlands subsector very well, and can recognise many famous pirate ships by their sensor signature.
- Co-Pilot Ashen: Ashen comes from the core worlds of the Imperium, and has a strange accent and customs. Off-duty, he wears bizarre garments made from tattered silk rags which he claims are the height of fashion on Capital.

Staff

- Purser Vaughan
- Ship's Doctor Bourke*: Bourke died in the aftermath of the explosion – he opened the airlock into the engineering section to tend to the wounded, and was then sucked out into space when the automatic systems vented the atmosphere.
- Cargo Chief Niven: Niven's a stocky, foul-mouthed stevedore. He has named the ship's two cargo robots after his ex-husbands.

Marine Squad

- Marine Commander Harc: Paranoid Harc is convinced the ship – and, more importantly, one of his soldiers - were the victims of sabotage. He suspects there is a Zhodani agent on board. Harc's only happy when dressed in battle armour with a gun in his hand and floating in deep space towards an enemy ship. He has several cybernetic enhancements, including a misaligned cranial jack. With the death of the ship's doctor, he needs someone with Medic 3 to realign the jack after every jump or he suffers blinding headaches.
- 6 Marines
- Marine Jen Laral: She joined the Imperial Marines to see the galaxy, and always goes out exploring each new world the *Martin II* visits. She cultivates her popularity among the crew so she can switch duty rosters and ensure she can take time off planetside.
- Marine Codenko*: Killed by the explosion.
- Marine Salvesdes
- Marines 4-6

Gunnery

- Tactical Officer Grimsbold: A veteran naval officer and a close friend of Pilot Smith, Grimsbold hails from the Spinward Marches. She butts heads regularly with Commander Harc.
- Launch #1 Pilot Hanshaw
- Launch #2 Pilot
- 8 Gunners
- Crewman O'Leary & Crewman Ilin: This pair of troublemakers go drinking in every port. Captain Torsa loathes them, and intends to have them both transferred off the ship after the mission. The two know their days are numbered, so they intend to make as much trouble for the captain as possible.
- Gunners 3-8*

Engineering

- Chief Engineer Eco*
- Mechanic Polo: With the death of the chief engineer, Polo's taken over the engineering section. He has a simple, salt-of-the-spaceways mechanic who never wanted to be in command, but he feels he owes it to the dead crew to get the *Martin II* to its destination. Polo is very superstitious and likes to hire people who seem 'lucky.'
- Mechanic Talis: It's an open secret on the lower decks that she and Felmar were lovers. If questioned, she reveals that Felmar kept talking about a 'new beginning' for both of them where they would be rich and free, but he refused to explain the plan. He also spent a lot of time talking to Launch Pilot Henshaw and Salvesdes.
- Mechanic Felmar*: Part of Hroal Irontooth's team. Most of the crew suspect Felmar was to blame for the explosion. He was notoriously unlucky and sloppy, and he worked on the jump drive.
- Engineers 4-6*

CAPTAIN TORSA

Commanding a Treasure Ship is a prestigious but ultimately hollow assignment. Treasure Ships are a symbol of the power and wealth of the Third Imperium, and a vital part of diplomatic and trade missions, so their captains are effectively ambassadors and representatives of the Iridium Throne. At the same time, a Treasure Ship is really just an overblown freighter, and will never engage in combat or win glory. Captains of the Treasure Ship fleet, therefore, tend to be those whose political connections and family backing are balanced by their lack of talent.

'Prestigious but ultimately hollow' also describes Captain Torsa. His family connections got him a command, but he is entirely lacking in charisma or imagination. Charitably, he might be described as 'meticulously attentive to detail' – he is the sort of commander who might berate a subordinate for failing to polish a computer screen to a mirror finish, while remaining completely oblivious to the approaching pirate ship on that screen. He runs his ship in strict accordance with the manual, and tolerates no deviation.

He is precisely the wrong person to captain the *Martin II* right now. He panicked when the jump drive exploded, and effectively gave over command to his first officer. He knows that he needs to reassert his authority if he is to have any hope of retaining command after this mission.

During flight, Torsa rarely leaves the top two decks; the only time he descends into the crew or cargo sections is to berate the crew for not scrubbing the deck plates or responding adequately to his battle drills.

CAPTAIN TORSA

AGE			TERMS	
46			6	
STR	6	INT	4	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	10	Admin 2, Advocate 1, Astrogation 1, Athletics (dexterity) 1, Carouse 2, Diplomat 2, Electronics (comms) 1, Leadership 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Tactics (naval) 1, Vacc Suit 1
END	9	SOC	11	

Playing Torsa:

- Be snooty and superior. Look down on the rabble and barbarians around you.
- Speak in a clipped tone. Give orders.
- Have a nervous twitch.

Using Torsa:

- If any of the pirates have a Naval background (especially the Imperial Navy), they can convince Torsa to hire them as temporary crew.
- If the Travellers convince him that he can rely on them instead of Jagad, then the pirates can manipulate themselves into positions of authority on board the *Martin II.*

FIRST OFFICER JAGAD

When they assigned Mari Jagad to the *Martin II*, they made it clear that her real role was to babysit Captain Torsa. Jagad's a fast-rising star in the Imperial Navy; she was top of her class at the Tobia Naval College, and can expect to be promoted to captain within five years. She will not be given the *Martin II* – she has her eye on a Gazelle-class, and that is only a stepping stone towards her dream of commanding a warship.

She took charge during the disaster, and gave the order to vent the atmosphere from the engineering section. Some of the crew blame her for the deaths, saying that if only she had waited, more of the engineering crew might have survived. Others credit her with saving the ship. She has also taken charge of the repair efforts – if she carries the *Martin II* across the Trojan Reach, it will boost her prospects of promotion immensely.

Jagad loathes pirates – she served on a pirate hunter patrol early in her career, and saw firsthand the destruction wreaked by raiders.

COMMANDER MARI JAGAD

AGE			TERMS	
34			4	
STR	7	INT	10	SKILLS
DEX	9	EDU	11	Admin 2, Astrogation 1, Electronics (comms) 2, Electronics (computers) 1, Electronics (sensors) 1, Engineer (power) 2, Gunner (turret) 2, Leadership 2, Mechanic 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Recon 1, Science 0, Tactics (Naval) 2, Vacc Suit 1
END	7	SOC	7	

Playing Jagad:

- Imagine her as the slightly Mary-Sueish protagonist of a series of military-sci-fi novels. She is the heroine of an adventure that is happening parallel to the adventures of the pirates.
- She is forthright, charismatic and heroic. She is always in the thick of the action.
- Stay on your toes. She is always ready for action.

Using Jagad:

- If the pirates impress Jagad with their technical skills, she may hire them for the repair work or even the journey to the Hierate.
- On board, the Travellers can exploit Jagad's unpopularity with the crew to turn them against her.
- Jagad leads any investigations on board ship.

ASTROGATOR OSHA

Osha comes from the waterworld of Dolberg, in Sindal subsector, and has the genetic modifications common to people from that planet – bluish skin, gills, webbed fingers and strange ridges of body fat. Few ever leave the cold waters of Dolberg, but Osha is an exception. She joined the crew of a tramp trader at the age of fifteen, and has travelled the stars ever since. She ran away because her family name was disgraced with accusations of gene-mod DNA corruption and, on Dolberg, your gene-line counts for everything.

Eight years ago, she helped the crew of a lost scoutship return to Tobia, and was rewarded with the offer of a commission in the navy. She knows many of the more obscure systems of the Reach very well, and so is considered a valuable asset to the navy.

Secretly, she is working for the General Development Corporation. GeDeCo's agents control the government of Dolberg; they have promised to erase the stain on her gene-line if she completes her assigned task. She has planted a black box device inside the navigation console. This device harvests data from the jump engines and locking mechanism of the vault. The calculations needed to crack the vault's encryption are beyond anything on the ship – but GeDeCo has a computer on Tech-World that uses cutting-edge TL15+ technology. With the right data from the black box, it can crack the vault.

ASTROGATOR OSHA

AGE			TERMS	
34			4	
STR	8	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	5	EDU	9	Athletics (strength) 2, Astrogation 3, Deception 1, Electronics (computers) 2, Electronics (sensors) 1, Mechanic 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Science (planetology) 2, Stealth 0, Streetwise 1
END	9	SOC	5	

Playing Osha:

- You are really not cut out for intrigue and espionage. Stammer and flap your hands nervously in any conversation about the explosion or the plan to rob the vault.
- Check your fingers for the black lesions that mark incipient genetic corruption.
- Puff out your cheeks and act slightly fishy.

Using Osha:

- Osha is the weak link in the GeDeCo scheme – if the Travellers investigate Osha, they can find the black box.

PURSER VAUGHAN

The arm of the General Development Company is long indeed. Their agents are everywhere in the Trojan Reach, pulling strings and manipulating events to push the sector into the right sort of war with the Aslan. Vaughan was an ambitious clerk in the naval office in Tobia. A GeDeCo spy started by bribing him to pass on gossip and internal rumours... then they bribed him a little more to pass on shipping schedules and naval patrols. The bribes grew bigger, and soon Vaughan crossed the line from criminal to traitor. If his treachery were ever revealed, the Navy would imprison or execute him.

Now, Vaughan is so enmeshed in GeDeCo's schemes that he cannot back out. The company promised him an escape – if he completes one last mission, they will set him up with a new identity in some distant sector. All he needs to do is make sure the false treaty gets into the right hands.

The fake treaty is concealed in his quarters (see page 61).

PURSER VAUGHAN

AGE			TERMS	
50			8	
STR	5	INT	9	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	10	Admin 3, Athletics 0, Broker 2, Deception 2, Electronics (comms) 1, Electronics (computers) 2, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Stealth 1, Steward 2, Streetwise 1
END	5	SOC	8	
WEAPONS				Concealed on his person, Vaughan carries a Gauss Pistol (3D, AP 3, Auto 2).

Playing Vaughan:

- You come across as a grey bureaucrat, caring only about paperwork and protocol – Captain Torsa's right-hand martinet.
- Secretly, you know this is the most important flight of your life. If you get the fake treaty into the hands of the Byrni Star Guard or even an influential pirate band, then you are guaranteed a retirement of sybaritic luxury on some distant pleasure-world. Fail, and you are a dead man.
- Be cold, unsympathetic, even murderous if necessary.

Using Vaughan:

- Vaughan should remain in the background until either the Travellers discover the GeDeCo plot, or until it is time to get the fake treaty into play.

MARINE SALVESDES

Salvesdes is a veteran of a pirate hunting expedition into the Trojan Reach. He received the Medal of Tobia for his actions when storming a pirate space station in Dpres subsector. According to the official account, Salvesdes was separated from his team, but managed to singlehandedly break through enemy defences and forced the pirate leaders to retreat.

The truth is very different. Salvesdes remembers cutting through an airlock door with his battle dress' built-in torch – and then being overpowered by a huge Aslan, even though Salvesdes was in power-assisted armour and the Aslan wore only a light vacc suit. The Aslan – Hroal Irontooth – disarmed Salvesdes, and held him down while a woman removed his helmet. The woman was a telepath... and Salvedes remembers nothing more.

He knows, but cannot remember, that he must serve Hroal Irontooth. The telepathic conditioning lodged in his brain ensures his compliance with the pirate's plans.

MARINE SALVESDES

AGE			TERMS	
26			2	
STR	9	INT	6	SKILLS
DEX	8	EDU	9	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Electronics (sensors) 1, Gun Combat (energy) 2, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Melee (blade) 1, Melee (unarmed) 3, Pilot (small craft) 1, Stealth 0, Vacc Suit 2
END	10	SOC	5	
WEAPONS				Salvesdes carries a body pistol (2D) at all times. If he can, he wears his Battle Dress (TL13) and carries a laser rifle (5D+3) or PGMP-13 (1DD).

Playing Salvesdes:

- You are trapped in a living nightmare. You are conditioned to obey Hroal Irontooth, and he is forcing you to break every oath and turn on your fellow soldiers.
- When pressed, you use violence. The conditioning turns you into an amoral, remorseless killer when necessary.
- Try to cram as much living as you can into the brief gaps when you are not controlled. Others see you as a wild, dissolute pleasure-seeker, when in fact you are living desperately.

Using Salvesdes:

- He is the main combat threat on board the *Martin II*. If the Travellers try to thwart Hroal's plans while onboard, they will have to deal with a psychotic space marine in battle dress.

LAUNCH PILOT HANSHAW

Hroal Irontooth's agents are thorough. They tracked Hanshaw's daughter to her school on Cyan in Pax Rulin subsector, and told the child to pass on a message to her mother. 'Do what we tell you', they said, 'or the child suffers.' As Hanshaw was an offworlder, going to the notoriously insular Cyanese authorities was pointless. She agreed to help the pirates.

She hoped it would all end without bloodshed, that the conservative Captain Torsa would surrender when his ship misjumped into an ambush. That hope ended when the jump drive exploded. Hanshaw was in her shuttle adjacent to engineering section when the explosion happened, and saw everything through the thick viewport. She watched as her co-conspirator Felmar tried to insert a new jump solution into the drive, watched when Chief Engineer Eco noticed Felmar's fumblings... and watched in horror as Felmar panicked and blew up the engineering section.

Now, she is trapped. If she does not complete her mission for Hroal Irontooth, they will kill her daughter. If she tries to alert the captain, then Salvesdes' programming will kick in and he will kill her... but there is so much blood on her hands now that she cannot bring herself to go through with the crime. She wants to find a way out – preferably, a way that does not send her to a military prison or an airlock.

LAUNCH PILOT HENSHAW

AGE			TERMS	
30			3	
STR	6	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	10	EDU	7	Admin 0, Astrogation 1, Electronics (comms) 1, Gunner (turret) 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Pilot (small craft) 2, Mechanic 1.
END	4	SOC	4	

Playing Henshaw:

- You made a mistake when you let Hroal's men intimidate you, and a bigger mistake when you let Felmar kill so many of your crewmates. You want to make amends, but do not know how.
- You have been a wanderer, bouncing from one starport to another. You are most at home with travellers and vagabonds, and find the strait-laced naval crew boring. Bond with the Travellers.
- Your daughter is your anchor. She is currently at a boarding school on Cyan.

Using Henshaw:

- If the Travellers befriend Henshaw, then she turns to them to help her escape her predicament

ENCOUNTERS & EVENTS

Timing on these events is left deliberately loose, but they happen in the following order. They all assume inaction on the part of the Travellers – obviously, if the Travellers stop Salvesdes or intercept the ship themselves, then events will play out very differently.

Jump Restrictions (Before Leaving Arunisiir): Captain Torsa inspects the repaired jump engines, and decides not to push them. He announces that the ship will only be making two-parsec jumps until she is fully repaired. Instead of jumping directly to Tech-World, she travels via Acrid to Exe, then Tech-World, then Ergo, and then Byrni. The news is greeted with grumbling from the crew, as it adds several weeks to the journey.

- This change in route gives the Travellers several more opportunities to intercept the *Martin II*.
- See Voyage to the Hierate, page 58, for details on each system along the way.

Grumbling on the Lower Decks: Many of the crew, notably Cargo Chief Niven, feel the *Martin II* is too badly damaged and the crew too demoralised to complete the mission. They argue that the Treasure Ship should turn back and return to Tobia – another ship can carry their cargo to the Aslan Hierate. The captain refuses to listen to any such suggestions.

- The pirates can use this growing dissent to make allies among the crew.

The New Plan (Before Exe): Salvesdes and Henshaw meet secretly in Henshaw's launch on the engineering deck, and decide on a new approach – or, rather, another attempt at their old approach. They need to make sure the *Martin II* jumps into Hroal's ambush. Henshaw knows astrogation, so she can calculate the necessary course, but neither of them have access to the ship's jump engines or navigation computer.

- If the Travellers are nearby, they can spot the meeting and eavesdrop.

Killing Laffit (Before Exe): After Henshaw completes the jump calculations and gives them to Salvesdes, the marine goes to the quarters of assistant astrogator Ven Laffit and kills him. He then takes Laffit's log-in codes to the ship's navigation computer.

- Salvesdes uses a silenced body pistol to kill Laffit.
- If possible, Salvesdes tries to set up a distraction or frame the Travellers for the crime.
- If Laffit is not in his quarters, then Salvesdes roams the ship until he finds him and waits for an opportunity to strike. This means the murder may take place near wherever the pirates are.

Seizing the Bridge: Finally, Salvesdes takes his battle dress from the locker on the crew deck, exits the ship via the airlock on that level and then walks along the hull to the uppermost level. He enters the ship again by forcing open the launch bay airlock and storms the bridge, killing Habinar and Smith. He inputs the new jump co-ordinates and activates the jump engines.

- A successful Science (psychology) check (INT) confirms Salvesdes is under some sort of mental compulsion, like post-hypnotic conditioning or telepathic control.
- Salvesdes goes via the airlock to avoid attracting attention (walking to the bridge in battle dress is pretty much the definition of attracting attention). If the pirates are shadowing the *Martin II* in space, they may spot Salvesdes leaving the airlock.
- It takes Salvesdes several minutes to cut through the airlock. While he avoids detection by the ship's security systems, the Travellers can use this time to stop him.
- See Irontooth's Ambush if this comes to pass.

Trapped in Jump Space (only if Salvesdes succeeds): If Hroal's pawns complete their mission, then the *Martin II* is locked on course for an ambush. The crew have a week in jumpspace to prepare for their inevitable confrontation with Hroal's fleet.

- The *Martin II* has no chance of prevailing in a stand-up fight, and Captain Torsa is not tactically imaginative enough to come up with an alternative. If the Travellers step forward with a plan, they can save the ship.
- Alternatively, this is an excellent time to whip up support for a mutiny. Many of the crew argue that surrender is their only hope, but Torsa refuses to even contemplate abandoning the cargo to the pirates.
- See Irontooth's Ambush for the confrontation with the pirates.

The Second Debate: After Irontooth's ambush (or, alternatively, after Salvesdes' attempted take-over of the bridge is foiled), the crew's dissatisfaction with the ship's course grows. They elect one of the marines, the popular Jen Laral, to bring their concerns to the senior officers. Captain Torsa refuses to listen, and threatens to put Laral in the brig. He announces to the crew that the ship has a vitally important mission to complete for the good of the Imperium, and that nothing will convince him to turn back.

- If the pirates have infiltrated the crew, one of them could accompany Laral to the meeting with the captain.
- This incident can be used to stir up more dissent or spark a mutiny.

Jump Drive Blowout (After Exe): The damaged jump drive fails to function again. Fortunately, the safety systems work this time, so there is not a repeat of the previous explosion, but the two Gazelle escorts jump away, leaving the *Martin II* to fend for itself until they return.

- If a Traveller is on hand in the engine room, a successful Engineer (jump) check (INT) can save the day.
- As the Gazelles are capable of Jump-4, and only made a two-parsec jump, they will return in two weeks. Protocol dictates the *Martin II* wait for them to return.
- If the pirates are shadowing the Treasure Ship, then this is an excellent opportunity for them to attack.

Seizing the Treasure Ship

Instead of stealing some of the cargo or attacking the *Martin II*, the Travellers may prefer to steal the whole ship. To do so, they need to:

- Eliminate or suborn the crew
- Seize control of the bridge
- Override the ship's security systems (DM-6 to any relevant checks)

The vault can be opened by the Drinaxian scientists of the Scholar's Tower, using similar TL15 techniques to those used by the GeDeCo conspirators (see page 60). Selling the Treasure Ship is impossible, but the Travellers can use it as a pirate ship or strip it for parts.

ESCORT SHIPS

Once the *Martin II* leaves Arunisiir, she is accompanied by two other vessels – the Gazelle-class escorts Arshad and Komino (see High Guard, page 130). All three ships jump in unison, using synchronised jump solutions (see High Guard, page 14). Technically, Captain Torsa of the *Martin II* commands the flotilla, although the other two captains are well aware of Torsa's limitations as a tactician.

C H A P T E R - S I X

IHATEI!

"Follow me, and we will win land for your sons and your son's sons. Follow me, and we will win glory! Follow me, and we will take the worlds of Humaniti and make them ours, now and until the stars fail!"

- Eihei the Clever

This adventure takes place in the Tlaiowaha subsector of the Trojan Reach. The adventure begins on Drinax, or in a system nearby where the characters can be contacted by King Oleb.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Spies working for **Kasiyl of the Ahroay'if**, an Aslan exile in the court of the Floating Palace, report that a large number of Second Sons are gathering in an Aslan system only a short distance from Drinax. He suspects they are preparing for an invasion. King Oleb bids the Travellers enter Aslan space and find a way to ensure the nascent Empire of Drinax is not crushed by an Aslan invasion fleet.

After crossing the border and evading or finding a way past any patrols, the Travellers arrive at Kteireo. There, they must somehow spy on the councils of the *Ihatei*, and prove themselves capable of surviving in the violent male-dominated camps. They learn that most of the second sons come from the *Htyowao*. For decades, the *Htyowao* and their rivals, the *Hkaaiheir*, have been locked in combat over the world of Keaih, nine parsecs rimward and deep in Hierate space. After multiple triumphs, the *Hkaaiheir* seem about to win the war, and *ihatei* who would normally go seeking glory under the banner of the *Htyowao* are now turning their eyes elsewhere. The best way for the Travellers to preserve Drinax is to prolong the war...

The war on Keaih is what the Aslan call *tehlaicho,* a strictly limited war. Both sides agreed beforehand to limit themselves to set forces and set weapons – it is a continent-sized arena fight on a nearby planet called Akoaft, a duel between armies, and the *Hkaaiheir* are winning. The *Htyowao* could escalate the war, but it would cost them honour. If the Travellers can sabotage the limited war, though, the conflict could become a huge conflagration, drawing the *ihatei* back from the border.

The Travellers must then make a perilous journey into Aslan space to Keaih, and come up with a way to change the war for the worse...

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Ihatei! is an adventure with a time limit – if the Travellers fail to resolve the threat of the Ihatei within 25 weeks, then the Aslan spill over the border and attack. 25 weeks might seem like plenty of time, but the Travellers will find themselves jumping all over the subsector, and every week in jump space eats up more valuable time. The adventure is divided into five sections.

- The Threat briefs the Travellers on the situation, and gives them an introduction to Aslan culture. They must also decide whether or not to take Kasiyl with them.
- Into the Hierate brings the Travellers from Drinax to Kteireo.
- Camp of the Ihatei introduces the problem of the ihatei, and explores the war for Keaih that is the source of the rising tide.
- Finally, Escalation challenges them to find a way to sabotage the Aslan war.

At each stage, the Travellers are absurdly outmatched – this adventure is about turning enemies against each other, about sneaking and bluffing and tricking their way past problems, *not* direct attacks. While there are a few scenes where pulling a gun (or a popping a dewclaw) is the right approach, most challenges call for lateral thinking.

1. THE THREAT

This adventure begins either when the Travellers return to the Floating Palace of Drinax, or when they receive word through secret channels (say, via the trader Sal Dancet) that King Oleb wants to speak with them. The matter is, apparently, of some urgency, and sufficiently delicate that the king wants to speak with them in person instead of relaying his commands through holo-message.

INTRUDER ALERT

As soon as the Travellers jump into the Drinax system, they receive a transmission from Lord Wrax of the Star Guard, the makeshift Drinaxi defence force. If this is the first time the Travellers have spoken to Lord Wrax, they find him condescending and unpleasant. Lord Wrax wanted the *Harrier* for his own flagship, and believes the king's whole plan to reunite the Empire under a pirate flag is doomed to failure. Wrax is of the opinion that the only good pirate is one crushed to a pulp in the gravity cells of the Floating Palace. He warns the Travellers that Wastelanders spotted an Aslan raiding party consisting of at least three jump-capable ships on the far side of Drinax, and that ships approaching the Floating Palace may be attacked. Wrax adds scornfully that the Travellers should not 'turn tail and run like pirates usually do,' but instead signal the Star Guard for assistance.

Themes

Two intertwined themes run through this adventure.

The first is fear. At many points in the adventure, the Travellers face overwhelming odds. If they are the cowardly pirates they pretend to be, they should turn and run. Play up the danger and the terror – have Aslan intimidate them, describe everything in the tones of a horror movie, and always ask the Travellers about their planned escape routes.

The second is inevitability. There are no villains in this scenario (the closest is the arbiter Yae, but even exposing him will only temporarily delay the invasion). Everyone is driven by political or biological necessity. The Aslan *ihatei* are not moustache-twirling conquerors who fight for the sake of murder and carnage – they are slaves to their own cultural and biological need to own territory. There is no easy moral answer that will resolve the problems of this adventure; instead, the Travellers must decide what they are willing to do to save Drinax.

Wrax's intelligence is partially correct. Three Aslan ships did visit Drinax on a scouting mission. Two of these ships departed several hours ago, and jumped out before the Travellers arrived. The last ship, a small scout, remained behind to spy on the Floating Palace. The Palace drifts through the skies of Drinax on its mighty grav-suspensors. Instead of trying to fly past the palace, the scouts decided to bury their ship and wait until the palace came to them. The Aslan ship has lain buried in the sands for weeks, watching the Star Guard ships fly past, waiting for the Floating Palace to approach.

If the Travellers attempt to detect the Aslan ships from orbit, call for Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (sensors) check (INT). If successful, the Travellers spot an Aslan *ihateisho*-class scout (see *Ships of the Reach* page 64) buried under glassy dunes some 200 kilometres north-east of the Floating Palace. Once the Travellers detect the ship, they can easily divert course to intercept it. The scout launches as soon as it is clear that the *Harrier* is en route to its hiding place.

If the Travellers fail to detect the ship, then the Aslan wait until the *Harrier* has docked with the Floating Palace before making their move. The Travellers can either secure their cargo, disconnect fuel lines and make other standard preparations before launching in pursuit, or else they can damn the metaphorical torpedoes and just blast off with their cargo bay doors still open, trailing fuel umbilicals and coolant lines behind them. If the Travellers choose this option, have one of them make a Very Difficult (12+) Mechanics check (INT); if failed, the *Harrier* sustains 1D damage, ignoring Armour. If the check fails with an Effect of -4 or more, the *Harrier* suffers 2D damage instead.

CHASING DOWN THE SCOUT

A series of small explosive charges detonate, blasting the sand off the dorsal hull of the *ihateisho*. The little ship then lifts into the air and fires its thrusters, racing for orbit and the hundred-diameter jump limit.

The Aslan scout has Thrust 2; the *Harrier* has Thrust 6. Under normal circumstances, the scout would have little chance of escaping. In this case, though, the scout may have several advantages. Drinax's dust storms mean it is hard to fire on another ship while in atmosphere, and the *Harrier* may be out of position when the chase begins. The table on the page opposite lists how many rounds it takes for the scout to escape.

Starting Position	Turns to Vacuum	Turns to Jump
Detected from orbit	10	(22) 15
Fast Launch from Palace	8	(20) 12
Slow Launch from Palace	6	(16) 10

Starting Position: Did the characters detect the buried scout from orbit, launch from the palace risking damage (Fast Launch), or stow their cargo properly before departing (Slow Launch)?

Turns to Vacuum: How many turns it takes the scout (travelling at an acceleration of 2Gs) to break atmosphere. The thick dust clouds of Drinax behave like a thick sand cloud, inflicting DM-1 to all attack rolls and reducing damage from laser weapons by 1D. Furthermore, fighting in atmosphere is tricky – the referee may call for Pilot checks to cope with rising thermals or high winds.

Turns to Jump: How many turns it takes the scout to reach the jump limit. The value in brackets is the number of turns needed to reach minimum safe distance (640,000 kilometres). The value outside the brackets is the number of turns after which the Aslan may decide that risking a catastrophic misjump is actually safer than hanging around to get pummelled by the *Harrier*.

The Scout Ship: The *ihateisho*-class scout is described fully on page 64 of *Ships of the Reach* . The crew on board have DM+2 for any combat-related checks.

If the Travellers disable the scout before it breaks atmosphere, then King Oleb leads his Hawk Warriors (elite bodyguards equipped with grav belts) out of the Palace to board the ship as it plummets towards the surface. The king's men are able to pull the scout out of its death dive and salvage it (see *The Scoutship* on page 81). If the scout is disabled after it breaks atmosphere, assume it is destroyed unless the Travellers take special efforts to save it.

Lord Wrax's Star Guard show up too late to help intercept the scout. The Travellers may take every opportunity to remind Lord Wrax of his tardiness.

Should the Travellers fail to stop the scout ship, it shows up again on Kteiroa – see page 86.

WORD FROM THE HIERATE

King Oleb receives the Travellers in his private audience room. This 'private room' is the size of a gymnasium; magnificent architecture, awe-inspiring décor, titanic statues of previous kings and emperors, and the whole place is crammed with Oleb's personal items, like punching bags, boxing trophies, a half-assembled jetbike and a large collection of risqué paintings from the Lusty Phase of the Sindalian master-painter Thovair.

If the Travellers captured the Aslan scoutship, then the king is in a happy and boisterous mood. If the ship escaped or was destroyed, he is more morose and less willing to share his wine. Once the Travellers enter ("*shut the bloody door behind you! And turn on the godsrutted privacy field!"*), the king brings up a huge holographic map of the systems nearby. He points at the Aslan system of Kteiroa (Tlaiowaha/2125), and a series of holographic images pop out and circle around the planet. The Travellers see thousands of Aslan warriors gathered in a huge camp; other images show hundreds of small ships in orbit.

"Ihatei!" says the king.

King Oleb explains that he has received troubling word from the Aslan Hierate via the exiled Aslan noble Kasiyl. Many *ihatei* – landless second-sons, eager to conquer territory for themselves – have gathered on the icy world of Kteiroa. If a strong leader emerges, he might lead the assembled hordes of *ihatei* and landless males on a wild attack on one of the worlds nearby. A really strong leader might even be able to convince the clans of the Hierate to lend their support to the invasion – and Drinax is only two parsecs away from Kteiroa.

Drinax is not yet strong enough to resist an invasion. Oleb wants the Travellers to head to Kteiroa and somehow deflect the invasion. They must either stop the Aslan from uniting under a leader, or give them a different target or… whatever. This sort of petty micromanaging is below the dignity of a king. The Travellers are resourceful sorts – they can come up with something.

King Oleb cautions the Travellers that they must, of course, avoid implicating Drinax in any underhanded business or, well, war crimes or atrocities or thermonuclear explosions. He also suggests the Travellers may wish to consult with Kasiyl – or they might not. So far, the exiled Aslan has proved relatively dependable, but his past is still a mystery, and King Oleb is loathe to trust the safety of the realm to him.

KASIYL'S TALE

The Aslan noble Kasiyl lives on a balcony on the edge of the Floating Palace – he dislikes being confined. He sleeps in a high-tech self-assembling tent. His gear is of excellent quality, but is travel-stained and poorly maintained. He certainly appear to be exactly what he claims to be; an exiled Aslan prince once of good family, but now a penniless beggar.

Kasiyl's history is fully explored in *8: The Prodigal Outcast*; for now, he admits he is an exile from the Hierate, and that if he returns to Aslan space he may draw the attention of the ruling clans, who will likely dispatch assassins to eliminate him. He still has friends in the Hierate, though, and it was his agents who warned King Oleb about the gathering *ihatei* on Kteiroa. There must be some reason for the sudden influx of lordless *ihatei*, some shift in the balance of power between the clans. Aslan politics are notoriously opaque to outsiders, and while Kasiyl was once high in the councils of the ruling *Ahroay'if* clan, he is very out of touch.

If the Travellers are unfamiliar with Aslan culture, then Kasiyl explains the nature of *ihatei* and their relationship to the clans. Aslan males are driven to possess territory. Nothing matters more to them than owning *land*. It is a deep-rooted biological compulsion. Not every Aslan male is lucky enough to own land. Most territory is owned by the lords of the great clans, who then portion it out among their followers. Land passes from father to son, and most clans follow the tradition of primogeniture – the first son gets everything.

Ihatei – literally, second-sons – are males from wealthy families who did not inherit their family estates. They must therefore win territory some other way. Some *ihatei* fight against other Aslan clans, trying to take territory currently owned by another Aslan. Others travel out into space, looking for planets to colonise or conquer. The most dangerous *ihatei* have the backing of their families, who provide ships, weapons and funding for their wars and expeditions. Such successful *ihatei* attract many followers, drawn from the ranks of both other *ihatei* and poorer, lower-class males who would not otherwise have an opportunity to fight for land.

These *ihatei* gather in huge camps. There, different *ihatei* propose different schemes for winning territory. One might advocate joining another clan's war as mercenaries. Another might suggest invading a lightly defended world, or striking out for unexplored worlds beyond the Hierate. Another might return from a long scouting expedition with word of likely targets.

Ihatei are wild and unpredictable. Much depends on the personality and goals of individual leaders. A charismatic *ihatei* can galvanise an otherwise disorganised and squabbling group of aggressive males, uniting them into an unexpected crusade. The clans tolerate a little troublemaking from *ihatei* warbands, but step in when things get out of hand. The problem, Kasiyl warns, is that a clan is as likely to endorse and support a successful *ihatei* invasion as they are to pull their wayward sons back. If an *ihatei* suggests attacking Drinax, and gets sufficient support to start an invasion, one of the clans may decide the gamble is worth it, and lend their strength and protection to the invasion. In human terms, it is the equivalent of a nation going to war because a gang of rowdy teenagers decided to invade a neighbouring country. *Ihatei* make diplomacy with the Hierate a minefield.

Kasiyl advises the following tactics:

- Stay undercover. The clans know the *Ihatei* are a threat to the status quo that worries neighbouring systems, but the tradition of the landless conqueror is an ancient one. The Aslan will respond with terrible anger if they suspect the Travellers are meddling in the ways of the *ihatei.*
- The best cover identity for humans in the camp is that of a tinker. The Aslan identify gender very strongly with role, and only females may be technicians. As few females want to be surrounded by thousands of hyper-hormonal ultra-violent males, human techs are sometimes permitted to enter the camps to maintain the infrastructure.
- At the camps, look for agents of the various clans. While an *ihatei* warband might have members from many different Aslan clans and families, the more influential clans often have agents in place to influence the movements of the warbands. These agents are usually older, established males, but may be disguised as armed retainers of younger *ihatei*.
- Also look for the most successful and influential ihatei. It is these leaders who shape the future direction of the warbands – the Travellers must find those who might be planning to attack Drinax, and stop them.
- Kasiyl volunteers to accompany the Travellers as an interpreter. He also admits that he can provide an Aslan ship that will attract less attention than the *Harrier*. However, he demands payment for his assistance – he wants the promise that they will help him when he calls for it in the future (specifically, in *8: The Prodigal Outcast*). If the Travellers take him with them, then they can use his ship (see *Kasiyl's Ship*, page 81). Sidebars marked Kasiyl's Advice describe the added benefits garnered by taking the Aslan. Of course, the Travellers will also be taking on additional problems (see *Assassins of the Yerlyaruiwo*, page 82).

KASIYL

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Male	34 (5 Aslan terms)

STR	9	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	9	EDU	9	Admin 1, Advocate 2, Broker 1, Carouse 0, Deception 1, Diplomat 2, Electronics (computers) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Gunner 0, Independence 2, Leadership 1, Mechanic 1, Melee (natural) 2, Persuade 2, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Science 0, Streetwise 2, Survival 1, Tolerance 1, Vacc Suit 2
END	10	SOC	2 (12)	

EQUIPMENT Combat Vacc Suit (9), Yeheal Autorifle (3D, Auto 2)

Playing Kasiyl

- Reveal as little of yourself as possible. Your past must remain sealed.
- You've lived among humans long enough to understand their ways – including their natural fear of Aslan. Use that to your advantage.
- Spend a lot of time meditating. Suppress your emotions.

Prisoners of the Aslan

Chieftain Galx of the Vespexers (the wasteland survivors who live in the blasted wilderness below the city) arrives on the Floating Palace a day later. She confirms that her scouts saw three Aslan ships, and gives King Oleb holoimages of them. The Travellers can identify the ships as two *ihateisho* scouts, one of which is definitely the same scout ship that hid in the dune earlier. The third ship is a 300-ton light trader (*aoa'iw*-class, see page 72) that has clearly been refitted with added weapons, suggesting it is an *ihatei* raider.

Galx also reports that four Vespexers are missing. It is likely that the Aslan killed and then either buried or ate the bodies, but it is possible they were taken as slaves. The Glorious Empire is best known for practising slavery, but Hierate clans do sometimes use forced labour. If the Travellers reveal that they intend to head into the Hierate, Galx asks them to look for her missing tribesmen.

The Scoutship

If the *ihateisho* ship was captured semi-intact, then the Travellers may be able to have it repaired and use it for their voyage into the Hierate. The two crew (both young males) are both dead, and the ship's computer automatically wiped itself when the ship decided it was in danger of falling into enemy hands. However, a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check (INT) lets the Travellers access the ship's navigation computer. It came from Kteiroa, from the *ihatei* camp. Furthermore, searching the debris turns up a curiously ornate *Yuhaih*, a ceremonial battle-axe (see *The Trojan Reach* page 112). Any Traveller with strong ties to or knowledge of Aslan recognises the significance of the weapon – *Yuhaih* are traditionally given to warriors by a liege lord or *ihatei* leader. The *Yuhaih* has a family crest on it. None of the human Travellers will recognise the crest, but they can use it once they arrive at Kteiroa to identify which *ihatei* ordered the raid on Drinax.

If shown the weapon, Kasiyl guesses that the crest belongs to some upstart Outcast who is not part of the Hierate – the heraldry is not an established one.

Kasiyl's Ship

Alternatively, the Travellers can take Kasiyl's ship. His vessel, a 200-ton *Ktiyhui*-class Courier, is hidden in a hollow asteroid on the edge of the Drinax system. The vessel shows signs of considerable damage on its aft sections, suggesting it was attacked as it fled, but has been fully repaired. The interior of the ship is luxurious, implying that Kasiyl was an Aslan of considerable territory before his exile.

2. INTO THE HIERATE

Once the Travellers are finished with their preparations, they can depart the Floating Palace and head into the Hierate… and into the jaws of the Aslan!

PLOTTING A COURSE

Kteiroa is only two parsecs away from Drinax, so the Travellers can easily jump there directly. However, most human traffic into this part of the Hierate goes through Tyokh first, so if the Travellers want to avoid suspicion, they may wish to jump to Tyokh first and pass through immigration controls there.

Remember to subtract any time spent travelling from the 25-week time limit.

TRAVELLING IN THE HIERATE

Unlike the Imperium, there is no single authority in the Hierate. Each clan patrols the space around its colony worlds and controls trade and traffic there. Human visitors from outside the Hierate can obtain papers of passage from the *Tliaowaha* clan on Tyokh, which allows them to bypass tedious immigration checkpoints and security scans in the space of any clan that has a trade agreement with the *Tlaiowaha* (and virtually all clans have such an agreement).

Obtaining such papers requires visiting the Tyokh system and making a successful Admin check (SOC). If the Travellers arrive openly, then apply their negative pirate Standing as a DM. Remember that the *Pirates of Drinax* campaign starts at a pirate Standing of -5 with regards to the Hierate.

If they are in disguise, then they must make a successful Deception check (INT) and either change the transponder on their ship or use another vessel. If the check to obtain travel papers fails, the Travellers are delayed by a number of weeks equal to the absolute value of the Effect (for example, if the Travellers fails with an Effect of -4, they are stuck on Tyokh for four weeks). If the roll fails with an Effect of -6 or more, the Travellers are either barred from entering Aslan space or arrested.

If the Travellers do not have papers, then they must make an Admin check (SOC) at every starport; if this check is failed, the Travellers are delayed by a number of days equal to the absolute value of the Effect, and may be detained as above.

Assassins of the Yerlyaruiwo

Whenever the Travellers land on an Aslan planet with Kasiyl, roll two dice, subtracting the highest Streetwise skill among the Travellers as a negative DM. If you throw 8+, then assassins from the *Yerlyaruiwo* clan spot Kasiyl and attempt to eliminate him. If the Travellers take added precautions, such as modifying the ship's transponder or using Deception to disguise Kasiyl, the referee may apply additional DMs.

These assassins follow the Aslan rules of engagement, and politely inform Kasiyl that he is marked for death before attacking. They might send him an electronic message, or have a courier deliver a letter, or broadcast a message to all ships in the system (relayed through a neutral comms satellite, of course – the assassins keep their own identities secret).

The *Yerlyaruiwo* assassins are all males equipped with specialised hunting gear. They consider the Travellers to be retainers of Kasiyl and therefore valid targets. They avoid large-scale civilian casualties, but will use whatever weapons are best suited to the situation, from claws and knives to personal weapons to heavy energy weapons (if, for example, the Travellers wander around in battle dress). The assassins have access to ships (*Ktiyhui*-class Couriers or *Hraye*-class Scouts), but will not engage their target in space combat (although they may attempt to board the Travellers' ship while in flight using grav belts and boarding vacc suits).

ASSASSINS

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Male	30 (4 Aslan terms)

				SKILLS
STR	10	INT	7	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Deception 2, Engineer 0, Gun Combat (energy) 2, Melee (blade) 3, Stealth 3, Streetwise 2, Tactics (military) 1, Vacc Suit 2
DEX	9	EDU	8	
END	10	SOC	6	

EQUIPMENT	
	Combat Vacc Suit (13), Assassin's Blade (2D+4), energy weapons as appropriate

Describing the Aslan

For the rest of this adventure, the Travellers travel through the worlds of the Aslan Hierate. To make these worlds seem different and alien, keep the following traits in mind when describing Aslan locations:

- The Aslan are ***big***. The average height for an Aslan female is around two metres (6' 6"); an Aslan male can be up to 2.8 metres (9 feet) tall, and they are stronger, pound for pound, than humans. This makes Aslan equipment and furniture uncomfortable for humans, and may make the Travellers feel small, vulnerable or childlike.
- They are predators. This manifests in all sorts of ways – live animals are allowed to roam around their settlements (for when they want to hunt down a snack), buildings and gardens always have places to hide and spy, they use aggressive metaphors about hunting and killing, much more so than humans. The Travellers should always feel like they are being watched.
- The Aslan are artists. Everything is decorated with glyphs, poems, or images of past heroes.
- Remember the Aslan attitude to gender. Males fight and rule; females manage and make. A female Traveller who carries a gun or commands a ship may be seen as male by the Aslan, while a male human who runs a business or works as a technician is female in their eyes.

If the Travellers are in an Aslan vessel, they do not need to obtain travel papers or make Admin checks at each starport.

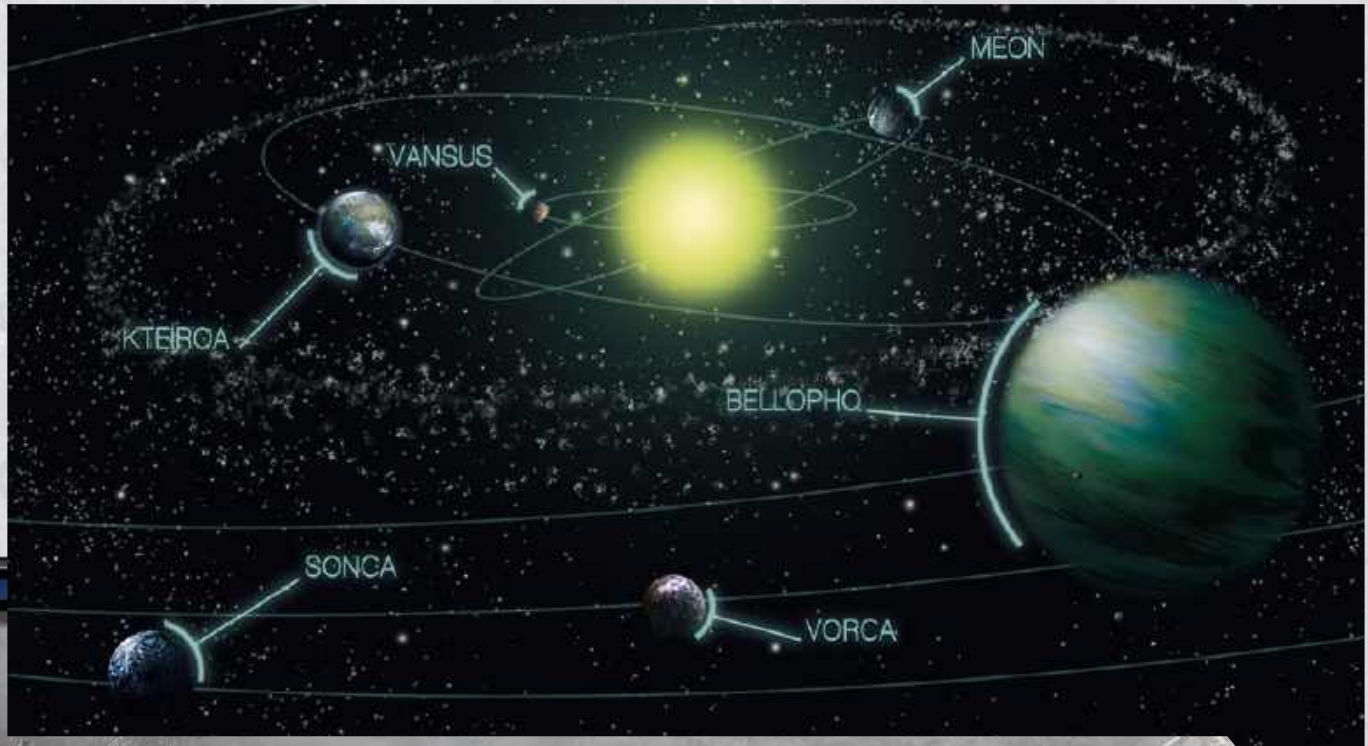
Piracy & the Aslan: Villainous Travellers may wish to grab the occasional cargo while travelling in the Hierate. The standard rules for piracy apply within the Hierate, with the following changes:

- Aslan ships commonly have higher Morale than those of the Imperium (when generating a ship's Morale score, treat any result of less than 3 as a 3).
- The Aslan have more combat-capable hunter ships that might respond to an attack. Add DM+1 when rolling on the Response table.
- While the various clans fiercely protect their own space, they are somewhat less likely to pursue pirates into systems controlled by another clan. If the Travellers jump to another system controlled by a different clan, they are unlikely to be pursued.

KTEIROA SYSTEM

Kteiroa is an arid iceworld with negligible resources, and is by far the most pleasant planet in the system. The other bodies in the system are still known by their old Sindalian names. From the greenish-yellow primary sun out, there is scorched Vansus, airless Meon, Kteiroa, the gas giant Bellopho and the rocky planets Vorca and Sonca. A small asteroid belt – exhausted centuries ago by Sindalian miners – orbits between Kteiroa and Bellopho.

Centuries ago, Kteiroa – then called Piper – was an



outpost of the Empire of Sindal. The punitive wars that brought the empire down claimed Piper as an early casualty, when a Sindalian Star Guard warship bombed Pipertown from orbit. The six-kilometre wide crater still clicks with enough radioactivity to fry a Traveller in a vacc suit.

The system is a backwater of such little importance that none of the clans ever bothered officially claiming it. The only world with valid territory in the eyes of the Aslan is Kteiroa itself, and there is little prestige to be had from claiming a few thousand square kilometres of barren, blast-scarred tundra. The only permanent inhabitants of Kteiroa are a family of Outcast, clanless Aslan who scrape a living by supplying the pirates, explorers and tramp traders who use this neutral world as a meeting place. Ever since the *ihatei* of this subsector adopted Kteiroa as a neutral campsite, the planet's economy has boomed. The Outcasts of the port therefore try to ensure the *ihatei* gatherings go smoothly.

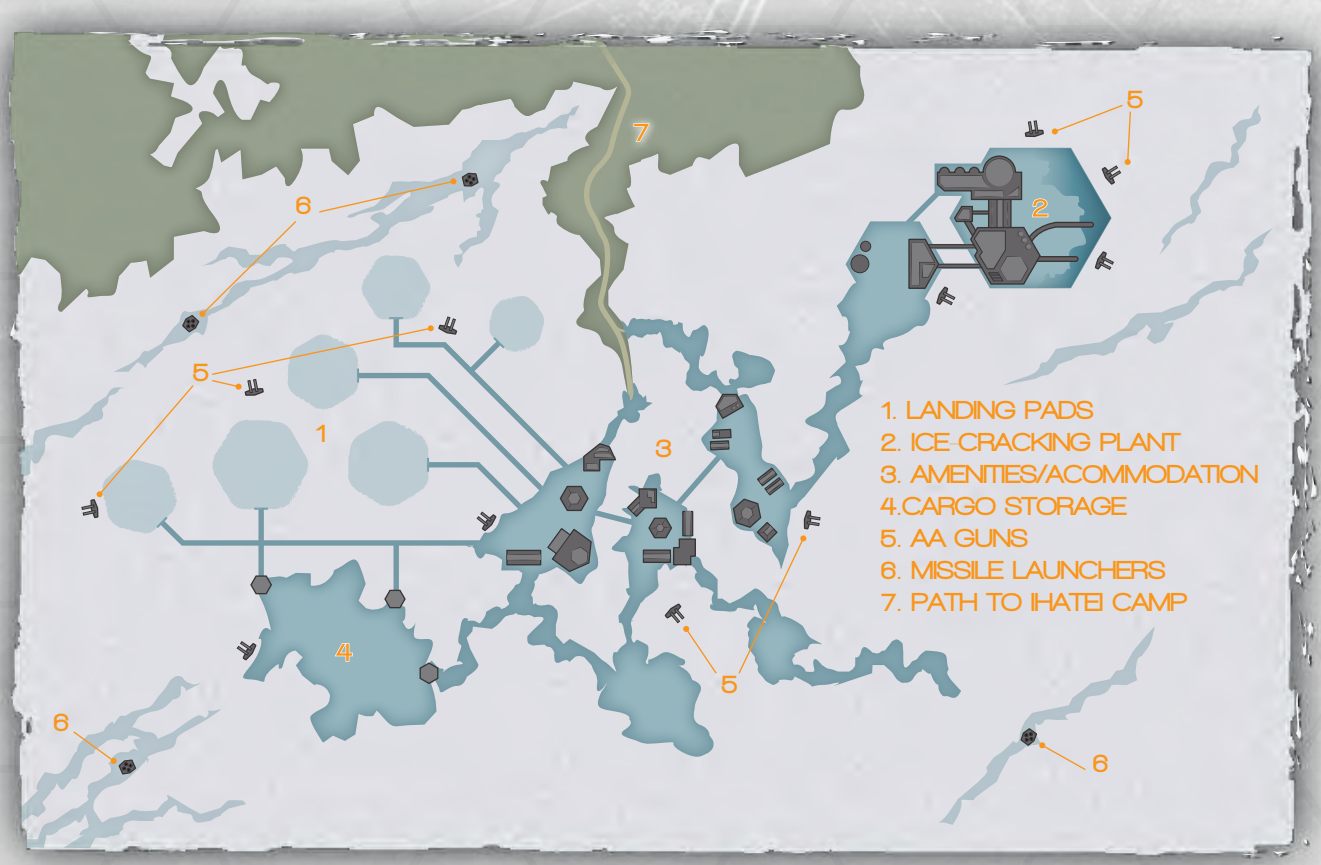
The *ihatei* camp lies some five kilometres north of the port.

THE STARPORT

The old Sindalian starport still exists in a state of disrepair, but is too close to the blast crater to use. The Aslan built a new starport on an icy plateau several dozens of kilometres to the west. A network of ice caves extends to the south of the starport, where most of the port's amenities and accommodation modules are located. Bright landing lights warn ships not to land on the ice above the caves. The Outcasts are paranoid; they built huge anti-aircraft guns at the same time they built their starport. Deep crevasses around the port contain concealed missile launchers.

As the Travellers approach the planet, an Aslan female named Utea hails them. Any ships heading for the *ihatei* camp can land there directly, and can contract with the starport's office for supplies. Other visitors must land at the port directly. If the Travellers are not in an Aslan ship, and do not claim to be tinkers, then Utea demands they land at the port first.

Unlike most Aslan ports, Kteiroa is merely Suspicious (see page 10).



KTEIROA SPACEPORT

At the Port: Utea is an elderly Aslan who wears a thick fur coat against the cold. Her coat appears to be sewn together from the hides of at least three male Aslan; she laughingly refers to them as her former husbands. Landing fees at the port are high (Cr600) but facilities are surprisingly good for such a small port. It has a large ice-cracking plant to produce hydrogen fuel slurry, and a pipeline carries fuel from the port caves to the *ihatei* camp. When the Travellers arrive, there are six other freighters landed, carrying food and other supplies for the camp. Business is booming here.

Any Traveller with Streetwise can identify Kteiroa as a possible pirate Haven. The Travellers can upgrade the port through the following actions:

Attitude	Action Required
Suspicious	None
Neutral	Visit the planet, including the *ihatei* camp and leave without causing problems.
Tolerant	Spend Cr10000 at the starport.
Friendly	Invest Cr100000 in starport facilities.
Haven	Invest MCr10 in starport facilities.

Utea as an Ally: The longer that the *ihatei* remain camped on Kteiroa, the more money Utea makes. She therefore wants to prolong the debate, making her a potential ally for the Travellers' plans to sabotage the camp. She can suggest ways to prolong the *ihatei*'s deliberations, like shouting down the plans of the warleaders or rallying support for a hopeless candidate. She can also identify key people to talk to, like Fyukh and Teaw (see page 94).

3. CAMP OF THE IHATEI

Walk out of the heated ice caves of Kteiroa starport and follow the well-beaten path north across the plateau. The cold wind howls, scouring you with ice flakes and the acrid fumes from the freighters' engines. Walk into the darkness of the icy world, and soon you see the lights of hundreds of campfires in a large bowl-shaped depression up ahead. The camp is a medley of chaotic shapes, lit by leaping flames and the running lights of small starships half-buried in the ice. There is an encampment of a dozen pup tents, where young warriors roast some unidentifiable meat on a cooking spit. There, a brash young noble stands atop his starship, roaring a song of glory to the assembled camps. He promises to lead a war that will seize fifty worlds from the humans and take the Hierate to the very gates of Pax Rulin itself.

Kasiyl's Advice

Kasiyl suggests the Travellers speak to the Outcasts who run the port; they know the movers and shakers in the *Ihatei* camp better than anyone, and may be open to bribery or some other form of underhanded dealing. The camps may look like chaotic gatherings of warriors, but they are the pressure release valve of Aslan society; leverage over a camp could help deflect the Aslan away from Drinax.

Over there, four older warriors – veterans of a dozen campaigns apiece – laugh at the foolishness of the young noble from the comfort of their large tent. They wait for an *ihatei* lord with a more promising plan for conquest. But even though they know the young noble is a fool, his promises of territory stir their blood. There, a female technician – one of the few females in this male environment – fends off the unwanted amorous attention of a trio of warrors with a welding torch before turning back to repair a damaged suit of armour. And there, steam rises from the gutted corpse of a dying warrior. His victorious foe screams a cry of triumph and raises his bloody dewclaws to the uncaring grey skies above. That scene, especially, will be repeated time and time again in this camp until the warriors unite under an *ihatei* warleader.

Walk on, into the heart of the camp. Here is where the real power resides. Here are the established *ihatei*, the ones with the money and the backing and the tactical expertise to run a victorious campaign. Behind them, in the shadows, are older warriors and advisors whose braided manes and clan badges speak of the territory they already possess. They try to influence the leading *ihatei*, hoping to shape the violent potential of the mob into a form that benefits their clan.

If you are a female Aslan, then this is a dangerous place for you. This is a male place, a warrior's place. You cannot own territory, but neither are you driven mad by the instinct to conquer. The men here all carry weapons they do not understand, and shelter from the cold winds behind ships they cannot repair. They know only their dreams of conquest.

If you are a male Aslan, then this place stirs your blood, it sings to your very soul. Roars of challenge rise up in your throat. This place is the crucible of destiny – you will camp here until you find or form a warband, and then you will go forth and conquer land.

And if you're human – you shouldn't be here. Leave.

EVENTS AT THE CAMP

The Travellers Arrive: The Travellers arrive on Kteiroa and explore the camp – see *Encounters*, below. The Travellers may also try *Gathering Intelligence.*

The First Night: Several *ihatei* try to win the support of the warriors in the camp, but the results are inconclusive. The Aslan Eihei and Elyo stand out as contenders.

The Warriors from Keaih: Over the course of the second day, more than fifty Aslan ships of varying sizes arrive and land at the camp. These are warriors from Keaih, mostly from the *Htyowao* clan, although some fly under the banner of their rivals, the *Hkaaiheir*. The Travellers can easily learn *The Tale of the War*.

The Second Night: Again, leading Aslan try to rally warriors to their banners. The influx of so many fresh warriors from the *Hyyowao* clan makes the *ihatei* warlord Iykhi a deciding factor – most of the camp will go where he goes.

The Decision: Unless the Travellers intercede, Iykhi joins with Eihei and plans to attack Drinax.

ENCOUNTERS

The *Ihatei* camp is a cross between a battle of the bands, an election hustings (aka a stump speech), and a mercenary camp. There are more than 5,000 warriors camped here, and the Travellers can count nearly a hundred ships. Most are *ihateisho* scouts, but there are bigger ships too, all the way up to *Sakhai*-class Assault Carriers massing 2,000 tons. Virtually everyone here is a male Aslan; around 5% are female techs, merchants or medics. The camp may look chaotic, and parts of it are indeed wild, but the ruling clans ensure hot-blooded young males do not get themselves killed too early by providing basic infrastructure and support.

At nightfall, the various *ihatei* shout out their plans for conquest in the hopes of acquiring sufficient warriors and backing to put their plans into action. So far, none of the notable *ihatei* (see page 90) have enough support, but hunting season only just began…

Roll two dice on the encounter table to determine what the Travellers encounter.

- Add or subtract a +1 DM on the tens dice before rolling if the Travellers are looking for a particular type of encounter. Encounters starting with a 1 are Violent; 2 indicate Opportunity; 3 suggests local Colour; 4 is for Rumours; 5 for the heart of the camp, and 6 for the notable *ihatei* leaders.
- Add a +1 DM to the units die if Kasiyl is with the Travellers, or if they have some other assistance such as an Aslan Traveller, or another Aslan advisor.

GATHERING INTELLIGENCE

If the Travellers captured or salvaged the Aslan scout ship (page 78), then a successful Investigate or Streetwise check (INT, 1D hours) brings the Travellers to Fyukh. Otherwise, they must make an Investigate check (INT, 1D hours) and consult the following table based on the Effect of the roll. Apply DM+2 if the Travellers have an Aslan ally.

Effect	Result
-3 or less	The Travellers' unwelcome questions anger an Aslan warrior. He and 1D+2 of his friends try to throw the Travellers out of the camp.
-1 or -2	The Travellers find nothing of use.
0	The Travellers learn The Tale of the War.
1-2	As 0, but the Travellers also learn the identities of the leading *Ihatei.*
3-4	As 1-2, but the Travellers also learn of Teaw.
5+	As 3-4, but the Travellers also learn of Fyukh.

The Scout Ship

If the Travellers failed to capture the scout ship on Drinax, then they can find it in the *ihatei* camp. The pilot of the scout ship attempts to flee if they confront him, leading them on a frantic chase through the camp. Capturing him leads the Travellers to Fyukh.

D66	Encounter
11-13	1D+4 thuggish Aslan bravos harass or attack the Travellers. The Aslan are drunk on hormones and Utea's homebrewed grog. They are armed with claws (1D damage) and autopistols (3D-3), and wear cloth armour (5).
14 to 15	1D+1 Aslan veterans spot the Travellers. Unless the Travellers can justify their presence (by claiming to be tinkers/having an Aslan escort/a Diplomat check) the veterans try to drive them out of the camp. They pack snub pistols (3D-3), shotguns (4D) and wear combat vacc suits (9).
16	An Aslan champion challenges the most dangerous Traveller to a fight. The challenged Traveller may choose to fight barehanded or use any weapon of TL3 or less. The fight continues until one warrior cannot stand any longer. If the Travellers accept and win, they gain DM+2 on their next roll of the 10s die.
17	An Aslan warrior has a grudge against the Aslan ally, and tries to kill him. The warrior carries a gauss rifle (4D, AP 5, Auto 3, Scope) and wears combat vacc armour (9).
21-22	One of the larger tents is a gambling hall. The Travellers can bet on anything from which ihatei will get the most supporters tonight to dice and card games. As the Aslan males have little understanding of money, the Travellers can easily win money. Make a Gambler check (INT), and gain (or lose) money equal to the Effect x Cr100.
23	Some of the Aslan have skills that would suit a pirate's life. Roll 5+ on 2D to find crew worthy of recruitment.
24	Ihatei need weapons and other supplies. The Travellers may sell any of the following cargoes at twice the normal price: Advanced Weapons, Advanced Vehicles, Live Animals, Luxuries, Medical Supplies, Pharmaceuticals, Vehicles, Illegal Weapons, Illegal Drugs, Illegal Luxuries.
25	The Travellers find a wealthy ihatei who needs passage back to his clan's space. He offers Cr30000 if the Travellers take him five parsecs to Oiwoiieaw (Tlaiowaha/0103).
26	An Aslan male mistakes the Travellers for tinkers and demands they repair his ship. A successful Mechanic check (EDU) fixes the minor problem with the power distribution system; if they refuse to help, roll 1D and go to encounter 10+die roll result on this table (i.e. 11 to 16).
27	The Aslan ally meets an old family retainer, an elderly warrior who never won territory. He is clearly too old to survive another campaign. Do the Travellers stop this old servant from throwing away his life, or do they help him achieve his dream of territory.
31	A herd of shaggy aua (Aslan animals called hoofmeat,(See *The Trojan Reach* page 62) breaks out of a pen and bolts for freedom. The Travellers must quickly jump out of the way or get trampled.
32	An Aslan bard recites tales of heroes from long ago. Any Traveller who listens to these tales of the hero Saifiwil gains DM+1 to any Persuade checks made against Aslan in the camp.
33	A human tinker repairs a damaged laser rifle belonging to a warrior. This tinker, a Solomani named Jarel Yean, comes from Vorito and is secretly a spy for the General Development Company.
34	The Travellers come upon a stall set up by the Outcast family who run the starport. Here, they can purchase fuel and other supplies, or meet with Utea.
35	A trio of veterans demonstrate combat techniques to young warriors. It is plain to see the Aslan are natural warriors – the males may not understand the technicalities of their weapons, but that does not stop them using them to terrible effect.
36	The Travellers find the body of an Aslan warrior; anyone with Medic can tell he was poisoned. He wears the badge of the victorious Hkaaiheir clan.
37	The Aslan ally brings the Travellers into a sacred Aslan shrine where outsiders are not normally permitted. There, they meet an old priest named Stea who preaches at them about the importance of honour and territory. If they impress the priest with a Difficult (10+) Persuade check (EDU), he anoints them; this blessing allows the Travellers to speak at the nightly meeting (see Manipulating Events, page 95)
41-43	The Travellers hear The Tale of the War (all true, but roll 1D to determine who tells the story: 1-3: Htyowao (losing side), 4-5: Neutral, 6: Hkaaiheir (winning side))
44	The Travellers are told about the notable ihatei and the notable retainers in the camp.
45	The Htyowao clan desperately need new territory to conquer, or they face dissent from within.
46	The Hkaaiheir clan intend to capitalise on their new power; once the war for Keaih is done, they intend to expand outside the Hierate (mostly false).

D66	Encounter
47	The Travellers' Aslan ally consults his contacts, and identifies Teaw as the most influential individual in the camp.
51-52	The Travellers run into a wall of bodyguards and well-equipped retainers who will not let them past. Either make a Persuade check (TER) to get past, or fight 1D+4 armoured (9) Aslan veterans equipped with gauss rifles (4D, AP 5, Auto 3, Scope).
53	Party time! Make a Carouse check (SOC); if successful, gain a number of DM+1s equal to the Effect to any Persuade checks made in the camp.
54	Duel of honour – one Traveller is challenged to a duel to first blood against an Aslan warrior. Make a Very Difficult (12+) Melee check (STR or DEX); if victorious, the Traveller gains a number of DM+1s equal to the Effect to any Persuade checks made in the camp.
56	The Travellers meet Teaw. The old Aslan sits in an ornate tent, surrounded by guards, assistants and supplicants. Recognising the Travellers as unusual visitors, he beckons them over to speak with him.
57	Fyukh spots the Travellers from atop his battered scoutship. If he recognises them as Drinaxi, he may try to flee. Otherwise, he guardedly meets with them.
61	Young Eihei the Clever holds court on board his 300-ton armed light trader. The ambitious Aslan has surveillance holos and intelligence on the defences of Drinax, purchased from Fyukh.
62	Eager Iykhi's court is in the middle of the large section of the camp dominated by the Htyowao warriors. Demoralised by their recent defeat, many of the warriors turn to drink and violence to lift their spirits. Getting to Iykhi is a dangerous prospect. Note that Iykhi arrives only after the event The Warriors from Keaih.
63	Brave Toiho of the Hkaaiheir arrives in a huge Halaheike-class pocket warship, befitting his status. Toiho has plenty of financial support from his clan, but has few warriors sworn to him. He therefore welcomes visitors who might add to his prestige, even human ones. Note that Toiho arrives only after the event The Warriors from Keaih.
64	The veteran warrior Elyo holds court with a gang of other battle-scarred ihatei in the very centre of the camp. Elyo despises humans.
65-66	The Travellers come upon a council of leading Ihatei, and have the opportunity to Manipulate Events.
67	The Travellers' Aslan ally pulls in political favours, giving the Travellers DM1D to their next Persuade check.

THE TALE OF THE WAR

The war between the *Htyowao* clan and their *Hkaaiheir* neighbours is key to this adventure, and the Travellers may hear many different accounts of the conflict. The basic facts are described below in a dry, neutral way – the referee should add colour and verve to the descriptions when the Travellers hear the tale.

- The *Hkaaiheir* and the *Htyowao* are both respectable clans within the Hierate. The *Hkaaiheir* are considerably more powerful, but the *Htyowao* are close allies with the major *Ahroay'if* trader clan who rule most of this subsector. Many centuries ago, they settled the water-world of Keaih together, and began a long-term engineering project to boil off some of the seas to thicken the atmosphere.
- The populations of both clans grew, and soon there was no unclaimed territory on the planet for the young males. The partnership between the clans broke down as neither side was willing to restrict their growth.
- Rather than fight on Keaih, where they might endanger the geo-engineering project, the two sides agreed to fight a proxy war on the nearby barren world of Akoaft. An arbiter (or, in the Aslan language, *earleatrais*) named Yae from the great *Khaukheairl* clan came to oversee the proxy war. Both sides agreed to deploy a strictly limited number of troops on the airless world, and that the clan with the last troops left standing would win the war. The losing side would then have to cede its territory on Keaih.
- For nine years, the war was a stalemate, with neither side able to win an advantage. Under the initial rules of engagement, if the war failed to produce a clear victory within ten years, both clans were permitted to send in reinforcements.
- Then, six months ago, the *Hkaaiheir* somehow located the underground fortress of the Htyowao and destroyed it with a sneak attack. While the fighting continues to this day, the conclusion is obvious – the *Htyowao* are going to lose.
- Now, the landless warriors of the *Htyowao* must go out into the galaxy and find new territory, for there is no prospect of them inheriting or conquering land back home on Keaih.

The turning point in the war was the discovery of the *Htyowao* Fortress. The *Hkaaiheir* claim their scouts spotted tracks left by careless enemy patrols; the *Htyowao* suspect a breach of the rules, such as the use of orbital spy satellites. Some even suggest that Yae, the supposedly neutral arbiter from the *Khaukheairl,* secretly passed on the location of the base to break the stalemate in exchange for some bribe (the truth is that the *Hkaaiheir* got lucky, and a scout stumbled upon one of the entrances to the fortress).

GAINING AN AUDIENCE

The leading *ihatei* – the ones the Travellers really need to talk to – are wealthy princelings from influential families. They are the ones with the power and backing to launch an invasion that might threaten Drinax. As landless Aslan, they have little or no Territory, but their families have lots of Territory and so they have a high SOC.

That means that the Travellers cannot just walk up to, say, Eihei the Clever and talk to him about his plans to invade Drinax. All the leading *ihatei* have bodyguards, servants and courtiers to control access to them. To get to the *ihatei*, the Travellers can:

- **Beg for an audience:** Difficult (10+) Diplomat check (SOC)
  - Add DM+1 per Cr5000 gift
- **Demand an audience:** Very Difficult (12+) Persuade check (SOC)
  - Add DM+1 per combat-ready Traveller or ship in the Travellers' party
- **Sneak in:** Very Difficult (12+) Stealth check (DEX)
  - Failure means the Traveller is spotted and attacked.

Aslan & Politeness

Aslan – especially Aslan males, and especially *ihatei* – are touchy about being shown the proper respect and deference. Aslan society is a maze of subtle social cues and pitfalls that is almost impossible for an outsider to navigate without causing some level of offence (actually, that is true of any society, but in this case, it is a society of eight-foot-tall predatory monsters with heavy weapons). If a Traveller fails a social skill check while talking to an Aslan, there is a risk of a bad reaction.

Use the Reaction rules in *The Trojan Reach* page 32.

Kasiyl's Advice

Kasiyl can brief the Travellers on how to approach an Aslan lord, how to properly praise an Aslan's lineage and family holdings, and how to avoid triggering an aggressive response. He also tells the Travellers to go in armed. Unlike humans, who interpret carrying weapons and armour as an aggressive or inflammatory gesture, not going armed among Aslan is seen as a sign of irrelevance. If you cannot defend yourself, you must not be worth attacking.

NOTABLE IHATEI

These four Aslan nobles are the most likely candidates in the camp to attract a 'critical mass' of followers.

EIHEI THE CLEVER
(TIYKHISTO CLAN)

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Male	24

STR	9	INT	11	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	10	Astrogation 1, Electronics (sensors) 1, Engineer 0, Gun Combat (slug) 3, Independence 2, Leadership 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Persuade 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Recon 2, Science 0, Survival 1, Tolerance 1, Vacc Suit 0
END	8	SOC	9	

EQUIPMENT	Combat Armour (15) with Grav Assist and Computer Weave (computer/1), Claw Edging (3D+1), Gauss Pistol (3D, AP 3, Auto 2)

Playing Eihei:

- Be intelligent, reasonable and cultured. You are a well-travelled Aslan.
- Cautiously evaluate every situation. Fight scientifically.
- Check your armour's computer system and sensors when talking to people. You're more comfortable with high-tech solutions than most of your peers.

An ambitious young Aslan from the expansionist *Tiykhisto* clan, Eihei spent several years exploring the neutral systems in the Trojan Reach. Most Aslan prefer to take Territory from another clan in ritualised combat instead of colonising new worlds (too slow and lacking in glory) or invading other settled worlds (which is often dangerous, inglorious or politically perilous), so Eihei went in search of planets suitable for conquest. With the help of the broker Fyukh, he identified Drinax as an excellent first target. The Aslan previously ignored Drinax as the planet itself is a blasted wasteland with little Territory, but the Floating Palace would make a perfect high-technology staging post for invasions of the trailing sections of Tlaiowaha and the Borderland subsectors.

IYKHI TOO-EAGER
(HTYOWAO CLAN)

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Male	28

STR	13 (19)	**INT**	7	**SKILLS**
DEX	5 (8)	**EDU**	8	Gun Combat (slug) 3, Heavy Weapons (man portable) 2,
END	8	**SOC**	7	Leadership 2, Melee (natural) 1, Persuade 1, Recon 2, Stealth 2, Tactics (military) 2, Tolerance 0, Vacc Suit 2
EQUIPMENT				Aslan Battle Dress (19, STR+6, DEX+3), Taoyuhrir Heavy Machinegun (4D+3, Auto 3)

Playing Iykhi:

- You're looking for a good death. Get excited about impossible odds and millions-to-one chances.
- Get angry whenever anyone mentions the defeat on Akoaft and what it will mean for your clan.
- Of all the leading ihatei, you could be the most charismatic and inspiring, if you were not wallowing in your own death wish.

The *Htyowao* planned to send more warriors to the war on Akoaft, and Iykhi would have led these reinforcements. For the last ten years, he trained to lead his clan's forces in a new and glorious offensive against their *Hkaaiheir* rivals. Then came news of the disaster, when the enemy located the secret fortress of the *Htyowao*, and it became clear that the war was lost.

Iykhi took his trusted followers and his ship – an 800-ton *Ekawsiykua*-class escort, currently parked in geostationary orbit above the camp – and came to Kteireo. His followers assume that Iykhi wants to find a new territory to conquer, but secretly the young warrior just wants a good death. His clan is about to lose its home on Keaih, and that means a long and painful decline into obscurity and eventual destruction. Iykhi would rather die gloriously in battle, instead of watching his clan become vassals to some hated foe.

TOIHO THE BRAVE
(HKAAIHEIR CLAN)

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Male	24

STR	9 (15)	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	8 (11)	EDU	8	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Carouse 1, Diplomat 2, Gun Combat (energy) 2, Heavy Weapons (man portable) 2, Leadership 2, Melee (unarmed) 2, Persuade 2, Recon 1, Survival 1, Tactics (military) 2, Vacc Suit 2
END	10	SOC	12	
EQUIPMENT				Aslan Battle Dress (19, STR+6, DEX+3), Gravity Spear (2D, AP Special)

Playing Toiho:

- You're invincible. Your clan is about to win a glorious victory, which means that you'll soon have all the backing you want to fight a war of your choosing. The galaxy is your prey.
- Condescend to everyone. Make them beg you for favours.
- Look down on everyone.

Brash and overconfident, Toiho left the war on Akoaft before it ends. A warrior of his reputation should be in line for Territory on Keaih once the *Hkaaiheir* declare victory, but Toiho decided to waive that Territory and go adventuring. Already, the Aslan bards sing tales of his prowess, and it is likely this latest gesture is sufficiently heroic and romantic to win him a place in legend. Two Aslan holovision crews follow Toiho around, and his exploits are known even across the Great Rift.

Toiho intends to win glory outside the Hierate, but has not yet decided *where* to plant his claw. He is contemplating the planet of Pourne (Tlaiowaha/0704) – like Keaih, it is a waterworld, so the same terraforming technology owned by his clan can be used, but Pourne has a population of hundreds of millions so conquering *that* will take the full resources of a whole clan. Still, now that all Keaih belongs to the *Hkaaiheir*, they can afford to look to the future…

OLD ELYO
(NO CLAN)

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Male	52

STR	10	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	8	Gun Combat (slug) 4, Leadership 1, Melee (unarmed) 3, Persuade 0, Pilot (small craft) 1, Recon 3, Stealth 2, Tactics (military) 2, Vacc Suit 2
END	8	SOC	8	
EQUIPMENT				Combat Armour (15), Autorifle (3D), Auto (2)

Playing Elyo:

- These other *ihatei* are fools – they don't know how hard it is to be landless. You're bitter and angry.
- Don't let the clans manipulate you. Don't let anyone manipulate you. You're tired of being used as a weapon.
- Stand much, much to close to the person you're talking to. Use your physical presence to intimidate them.

Most *ihatei* are aged between 15 and 30; Elyo is at least fifty years old, and every one of those years brought with it many scars. Of the warriors assembled here, he is by far the most experienced and most skilled, but he is also considered unlucky. For one to have fought for so long and still have no Territory to show for it is shameful. Elyo is an Outcast and so does not have the backing of a clan.

Each night, he calls for an attack on the human planet of Paal. This world was once part of the Empire of Drinax and is a rich agricultural planet, inhabited by humans ruled by superintelligent squid (or so they claim). Paal is indeed a prime target for Aslan attack, and has spent trillions of credits bolstering its defences by purchasing weapons from Vorito and the General Development Company.

NOTABLE RETAINERS

These two Aslan are not going to lead any warbands, but both have considerable influence on the fortunes of the *ihatei*.

FYUKH
(NO CLAN, FORMERLY KHYAHE)

Fyukh is a landless Aslan. The influential *Khaukheairl* broke the power of Fyukh's clan, the *Khyahe*, in a political skirmish decades ago, so Fyukh lost his former position and was forced to survive on the fringes of Aslan society as an influence peddler and information broker. He advises young *ihatei* on likely targets and deals with logistical problems. He owns the ships that visited Drinax, and he advised Eihei the Clever on the possibility of using Drinax as the staging post for further invasions.

Unlike the *ihatei*, Fyukh is reasonable and capable of compromise. His goals are to make money – unlike most males, Fyukh understands commerce – and to build his power base among the *ihatei*. He dreams of revenge upon the *Khaukheairl*, but has little hope of achieving any form of vengeance.

If confronted about his spying mission to Drinax, then Fyukh freely admits those ships belonged to him. Why deny it? All worlds in the Trojan Reach will one day belong to the Aslan, and the tide of the *ihatei* is unstoppable.

Playing Fyukh:

- Be sneaky and underhanded. You exist on the fringes of society.
- You're a mercenary; if the Travellers can offer you a better deal, you'll listen.
- You hate Teaw and his cursed stuck-up *Khaukheairl* cronies. If you can bring him down, it is worth any price.

TEAW, AGENT OF THE CLANS
(KHAUKHEAIRL CLAN)

Teaw is officially a representative of the council of clans. His role here is to advise and guide the ihatei so they do not interfere with the plans of the Hierate as a whole. The canny old Aslan has been the whip hand of the ihatei in this region for many years, and is adept at manipulating the movements of the young warriors to benefit the Khaukheairl clan and their vassals.

The coming tide of warriors from the war for Keaih means that Teaw currently wields huge political power. He could divert the ihatei to attack one of the other clans, triggering another war for territory within the Hierate, or he could send the horde off to attack a neutral world. Right now, he is waiting for the flood of troops from Akoaft to arrive before making a decision. The 'safe' option is to send the ihatei to a largely uninhabited world like Sink (Tlaiowaha/0806) or Fantasy (Tlaiowaha/0808) which would also counter the growing influence of the General Development Company at Vorito (Tlaiowaha/0709) – but he will act according to the best interests of the Hierate, his clan and himself.

Playing Teaw:

- Be diplomatic and pleasant, unlike the angry young Aslan. Be a statesman.
- You are the representative of the entire Hierate. Try to make sure the human intruders do not get themselves killed – they are your guests.
- You're the power behind the throne here; speak softly, but wield your influence as a weapon.

MANIPULATING EVENTS

The first task for the Travellers is to prevent an early invasion of Drinax. Currently, two figures advocate an invasion of Drinax (Eihei the Clever and Fyukh), but neither of them has the support to launch such an invasion. Two others (Iykhi and Toiho) have the supporters. The Travellers need to make sure that never the twain never meet.

How do they do this? There are several possible options:

Diplomacy:

- Persuading any of the Aslan to adopt a different target is possible, but tricky. The difficulty for a Persuade check starts at Very Difficult (12+), but the referee should apply DMs based on the Travellers' roleplaying and the nature of the offer. Saying 'please don't attack Drinax' is unlikely to work, but suggesting that Paal might be a better target and offering to help gather intelligence about landing sites might grant DM+2 to the check.
- Attacking an Aslan-held planet applies DM-2. The ihatei will only attack another Aslan world if driven by clan rivalries, or if the clan currently in possession of the world is especially weak.
- The best worlds for the Aslan are habitable garden worlds. Apply DMs to suggestions for conquest based on trade codes.
- The leading *ihatei* are rivals of each other. If the Travellers play the major ihatei off against each other, it is worth DM+1 at least.
- However, the ihatei also want to be on the winning side. If two or more *ihatei* already support a plan of action, then attempts to persuade others to follow the same tactic have DM+2.

If the Travellers don't Intercede

If the Travellers fail to intercede, then here is how events play out. The second wave of troops (consisting mainly of *Htyowao* warriors led by Iykhi) arrive from Akoaft. With their support, Iykhi decides to ally with Eihei the Clever and launches an attack on Drinax. Meanwhile, Teaw convinces Elyo and Toiho to conquer the worlds of Sink and Fantasy, neither of which have any political sway.

It takes Iykhi sixteen weeks to assemble his invasion force. More than three hundred *ihatei* ships containing more than five thousand Aslan warriors jump into the Drinax system. Even if the Floating Palace survives (see Out of Time, page 97), then the nascent Empire of Drinax is severely damaged.

Sabotage:

- The Travellers can delay any *ihatei* migrations by spiking the fuel from the starport. There are numerous chemical compounds that can be added to liquid hydrogen that will either jam the internal plumbing of a jump engine or vastly increase the chance of a misjump. Getting into the starport requires either sneaking in with Stealth or else convincing the outcast family to help – if the Travellers can guarantee Utea will not be implicated, the Outcasts might welcome a long delay to any ihatei migration, as it gives them a captive market for longer.
- Removing one of the *ihatei* from contention through poisoning or some other stratagem could affect the debates in the camps. If Eihei is unable to advocate for the invasion of Drinax, then the risk of an invasion is reduced.
- The Travellers could also plant evidence to dissuade the ihatei from invading. Through Fyukh, they could plant evidence suggesting that Drinax has exceptional powerful defences, or that the Floating Palace is under Imperial protection.
- Similarly, arranging a trap or accident to eliminate one of the *ihatei* could tip the balance.

Violence:

- Assassination is common among the Aslan. While it is polite to inform your enemies that you intend to murder them, the Travellers could be rather rude and just assassinate, say, Iykhi or Eihei without any forewarning.
- More ambitious Travellers could try an attack on the whole camp. They are outgunned several hundred times over, but they could try smuggling a nuclear weapon or some other weapon of mass destruction into the camp, or trigger an ice-slide with mining charges.
- Another option is to attack one of the *ihatei* and frame another. Tensions between the *Htyowao* and the *Hkaarheir* are already running hot; one little incident could tip the balance.

If the Travellers successfully engineer events so that Drinax is not attacked this year, then they have won a partial victory in this adventure.

All these solutions, though, are just temporary measures. Stopping the current crop of *ihatei* from Drinax may save the Floating Palace for a few years, but when the war ends on Akoaft and one of the clans has to leave Keaih, there will be *millions* of displaced territory-hungry Aslan looking across the border. If the Travellers want to find a permanent solution, they will need to head deeper into the Hierate.

Trade Codes & Conquest DMs

Agricultural (Ag):	+1
Asteroid (As):	-3
Barren (Ba):	-2
Desert (De):	-1
Fluid Oceans (Fl):	-1
Garden (Ga):	+3
High Population (Hi):	-1
High Technology (Ht):	+1
Ice Capped (Ic):	-1
Industrial (In):	+1
Low Population (Lo):	+1
Low Technology (Lt):	+0
Non-Agricultural (Na):	+0
Non-Industrial (Ni):	+0
Poor (Po):	-2
Rich (Ri):	+2
Water World (Wa):	+0
Vacuum (Va):	-1

with the Hierate, they must dodge patrols and customs cutters as they travel. Many of these systems contain Aslan naval bases, and the full power of the Hierate is evident as multi-thousand ton warships and capital ships prowl past.

KEAIH

A ring of orbital construction stations surrounds Keaih. Asteroids tumble towards the planet, nudged by grav-plates planted by miners. Soon, these asteroids will be hollowed-out and turned into colony ships, to carry millions of Aslan from the *Htyowao* clan away from the seas of their ancestors and out across the stars. Some may find a place elsewhere in Tlaiowaha subsector, but others will inevitably spill over the border. Millions more will change allegiance, giving up their claims of territory and becoming lower-ranking members of the victorious *Hkaairheir* clan.

While Keaih is at the heart of the problem facing Drinax, the Travellers gain little from visiting this world. Getting an audience with either *Hkaairheirko* or *Htyowaoko* (the leader of a clan is designated by the suffix '-ko') is virtually impossible for a human visitor. The Travellers can easily learn about the political situation on the planet and the importance of Akoaft, but they have no leverage here.

Unlike the wild *ihatei* camp or the war-world of Akoaft, Keaih is a civilised world by Aslan standards, with plenty of System Defense Boats and warships. If the Travellers cause trouble here, they may bring down the vengeance of two clans upon themselves.

AKOAFT

Blowing up Akoaft is about the only reasonable use for this chunk of rock. The dense, tainted atmosphere means the native biosphere is completely hostile to Aslan biochemistry. Every living thing on the planet is deadly poison. The world was designated as the site for a proxy battle between the two clans a decade ago.

Both clans adopted a similar strategy. They dug fortresses linked by tunnels to protect their troops from the lethal surface environment. Troops wearing environmental protection armour try to find entrances to enemy tunnels by crossing through the perilous slime channels. The rules of war prohibit the use of orbital or aerial assets, so it has been a war of tanks and infantry and bloody tunnel fighting.

The Akoaft system consists of nine other worlds, including two bloated gas giants. The system is out of bounds to visitors, so any ship that jumps in is told to refuel at the gas giant Khufu and then jump out again. Landing on Akoaft means running a blockade of Aslan interceptors (mostly 800-ton *Ekawsiykua*-class escorts).

Currently in orbit of Akoaft are more than twenty thousand Aslan warriors. Under the original terms of the 'strictly limited war' (*tehlaicho*), both sides would be permitted to deploy reinforcements if the war lasted longer than ten years. These warriors do not expect to be deployed at this stage, as the war is about to be won by the *Hkaairheir* within the time limit. The uncertain future of the *ihatei* lies before them.

Out of Time

Should the Travellers fail to find a solution to the threat of the *ihatei*, then Drinax and the other systems in the coreward portion of the subsector will come under repeated Aslan attack. These attacks should not be powerful enough to conquer the Floating Palace (or else the campaign would end prematurely), but the threat of Aslan raiders will make future adventures in the campaign more dangerous, and reduce assistance available from Drinax.

PROLONGING THE WAR

Possible options for prolonging the war include:

- **Piracy & Kidnapping:** The arbiter of the war, Yae, intends to leave Akoaft before the actual conclusion so he can preside over the ceremony of victory on Keaih. As a neutral arbiter, he travels in his own ship, a *Ktiyhui-class* 200-ton courier. If the Travellers could intercept and capture that ship, they could:
  - Plant evidence or force a confession, suggesting that Yae gave the location of the *Htyowao* fortress to their enemies
  - Prevent Yae from attending the ceremony, which means the war lasts more than ten years, which means that the *Htyowao* could then send in reinforcements
  - Kill Yae, disrupting the ceremony and throwing the status of Keaih into doubt.

- **Helping the Htyowao:** The *Htyowao* nearly held the line. If it were not for the unfortunate discovery of their fortress, they would have kept the war to a stalemate. The Travellers could intercede on their behalf, either subtly or overtly. They could:
  - Smuggle weapons past the blockade
  - Raid *Hkaairheir* supply ships, leaving them unable to deliver a final crushing blow to end the war.
  - Use ship's sensors to find the *Hkaairheir* headquarters, then relay that information to the Htyowao forces.

- **Using the Ihatei:** A poetic solution might be to use the *ihatei* at Kteiroa to prolong the war. If the Travellers could convince Iykhi to give up his honour for the sake of his clan, or convinced Teaw that an Aslan/human conflict is not in the best interest of the Hierate, then they might be able to divert the flood of landless warriors back to the conflict on Akoaft.

C H A P T E R - S E V E N

THE DEMON'S EYE

This adventure takes place in the Borderlands subsector of the Trojan Reach. The adventure begins on Tech-World, or in a nearby system where the Travellers can be contacted by emissaries of Tech-World.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The Travellers travel to Tech-World to conduct secret negotiations with the scientific council who operate the highly advanced colony. While there, one of the council, a brilliant nanotechnologist named Jali Astor, accidentally exposes herself to an experimental nanotechnological weapon. Infected, she flees the planet, and the Travellers are asked to pursue her.

From Jali's assistant, Lemuel Volin, they learn she comes from the planet Neumann, which fell victim to a nanotechnological catastrophe during the Long Night. She sought a solution to the nanotech swarms that still plague her world, but it seems to have driven her insane.

The Travellers pursue Jali to the world of Mirage, where she attempts to kill a representative of the Shield Church of Neumann, Archon Dreek. If she obtains the Church-only nanotech from Dreek, she believes she can save Neumann. The final confrontation takes place either on Mirage, or in the chaotic swarm zones of Neumann.

As a complication, Lemuel Volin is not what he seems.

BACKGROUND

The Solomani believed the path of technological development was straight and direct as an arrow. One discovery built upon another, and another, each breakthrough expanding the scientific knowledge of the species. There might be accidents, setbacks, the occasional dark age or ecological catastrophe, but the path of advancement bent ever upwards towards some unimaginable glorious future.

The Vilani, older and wiser, knew otherwise. Technological development is not a constant. It is like the tides. A world might surge forward in a great wave of advancement, a flood of knowledge, then fall back like the retreating surf. Hundreds or even thousands of years might pass without any further change, one generation following the rules and systems laid down by their parents, choosing comfortable stability over dangerous advancement. The path of technological development is not a straight line - it is a maze, with many blind alleys and even more pit traps and perils.

The Third Imperium advances not in a sudden wave, but with the steady, measured pace of a rising ocean. New developments are carefully monitored, weighed, judged and considered before they are allowed to come to fruition. The Imperium has murdered its share of geniuses and prophets.

The alternative is to risk the extinction of Humaniti. Look at the few examples of unfettered technological advancement. The Ancients wiped themselves out in an apocalyptic war. The Darrians nearly blew up their own sun in their hubris. And in the Trojan Reach, the transhumanists of Neumann brought ruin upon themselves in a single ghastly hour. The future must ripen slowly, or it will be bitter.

TECH-WORLD

Only a few parsecs antispinward of Drinax is the planet Tech-World. The ugly name - the product of a botched advertising campaign by the General Development Corporation - speaks of the planet's ambition. On Tech-World, there are no limits to scientific research, and no fetters on what a scientist can attempt. The colony's foundation was bankrolled by the General Development Corporation. Most of the researchers come from the Imperial subsectors of the Trojan Reach, especially worlds like Neumann. Others are eccentrics and radicals, drawn to a world where they can conduct virtually any experiments.

GeDeCo tolerates its collection of mad scientists, as long as they occasionally produce something useful and keep the automated starport operational. Tech-World is an island of advanced technology amid the backward worlds of the Reach.

1. OVERTURE

Rumours spread quickly in the Reach. By this point in the campaign, the Travellers should have acquired a Standing (even a negative one) that gives them a reputation as dangerous, ambitious people. Perhaps they have even recruited a few worlds to the banner of Drinax. The Travellers are becoming influential, and that attracts attention.

At some starport bar, or in the Floating Palace of Drinax, or in some other sleazy dive frequented by thieves and corsairs, the Travellers are approached by an emissary of Tech-World. The emissary slips a featureless black disc, about the size of a man's palm, into the pocket of one of the Travellers. The disc contains information on the Travellers, drawn from whatever data the masters of Tech-World have on them - Imperial arrest warrants, old naval records, DNA traces if they ever visited Tech-World and so on. The disc activates only if the Travellers are alone, to ensure no agent of the General Development Company spies on this overture.

An Alternate Approach

If the Travellers deliberately seek out an alliance with Tech-World (which is a very wise move), then you can skip straight to Landing on Tech-World.

At the appropriate moment (and if the Travellers do not notice the disc being planted or ignore it, this might happen when the Traveller carrying the disc is asleep or alone), the disc unfolds. It projects a perfect hologram - the image of a humanoid figure, his features concealed behind a silvery mask.

+++Greetings. Your presence is requested - discreetly - on Tech-World, where matters of mutual interest and profitability may be discussed. We offer you this gift as a mark of our respect, in the hopes of future friendship.+++

The gift is a computer data module containing a cutting edge (TL15, Bandwidth 4) Intellect program equipped with the Expert packages Science (linguistics) 3, Science (philosophy) 3, Science (psychology) 3 and Science (sophontology) 3. Installed on a suitable computer, it can advise the Travellers on its various fields of expertise. It is of marginal use for a bunch of uncultured pirates, but a lovely conversation piece.

LANDING ON TECH-WORLD

From orbit, Tech-World looks like a rusty wasteland. Native lifeforms are almost non-existent, unless you are a big fan of slime. The world lacks any notable mineral resources or anything else that might make it desirable for colonisation. Thousands of years of colonisation waves and empires in the Trojan Reach ignored it.

Then the colony comes into view, and it looks like a microcircuit spread out across the desert. In the centre of the colony is StarPort, a featureless matt-black hemisphere the size of a small city. It looks like the disc given to the Travellers, only billions of times larger. As the Travellers' ship descends towards StarPort, a docking platform grows to accommodate them and, when they land, it draws their ship through a seemingly solid barrier. The walls are composed of trillions of microscopic robots, who flow and reshape themselves to whatever configuration is required.

More macro-scale robots swarm out to service the ship. A servitor android - a perfect female form sculpted in brass and steel - comes to greet the characters and welcome them to Tech-World. She introduces herself as Sophia, and declares she has been assigned as the Travellers' personal guide and aide for the duration of their stay on Tech-World.

WONDERS OF SCIENCE

The Travellers are free to explore the public sections of Tech-World. Automated stores offer a limited amount of high-tech goods, robot-controlled repair yards and hangars provide ship repairs and upgrades, medical suites have the best anagathics, cybersurgery and cloning technology in the sector, and there are exotic high-tech entertainments of all sorts. Immersive holographic displays - so realistic they are utterly indistinguishable from reality - inform visitors about the research being carried out on Tech-World. Here, scientists experiment with psionics, cognitive augmentation, hyperspatial manipulation, and advanced nanotechnology.

Everywhere, the Travellers see robots - there are millions of robots on Tech-World - but only a handful of other living beings, mostly crews from other starships. Most of them look slightly stunned by the bizarre environment.

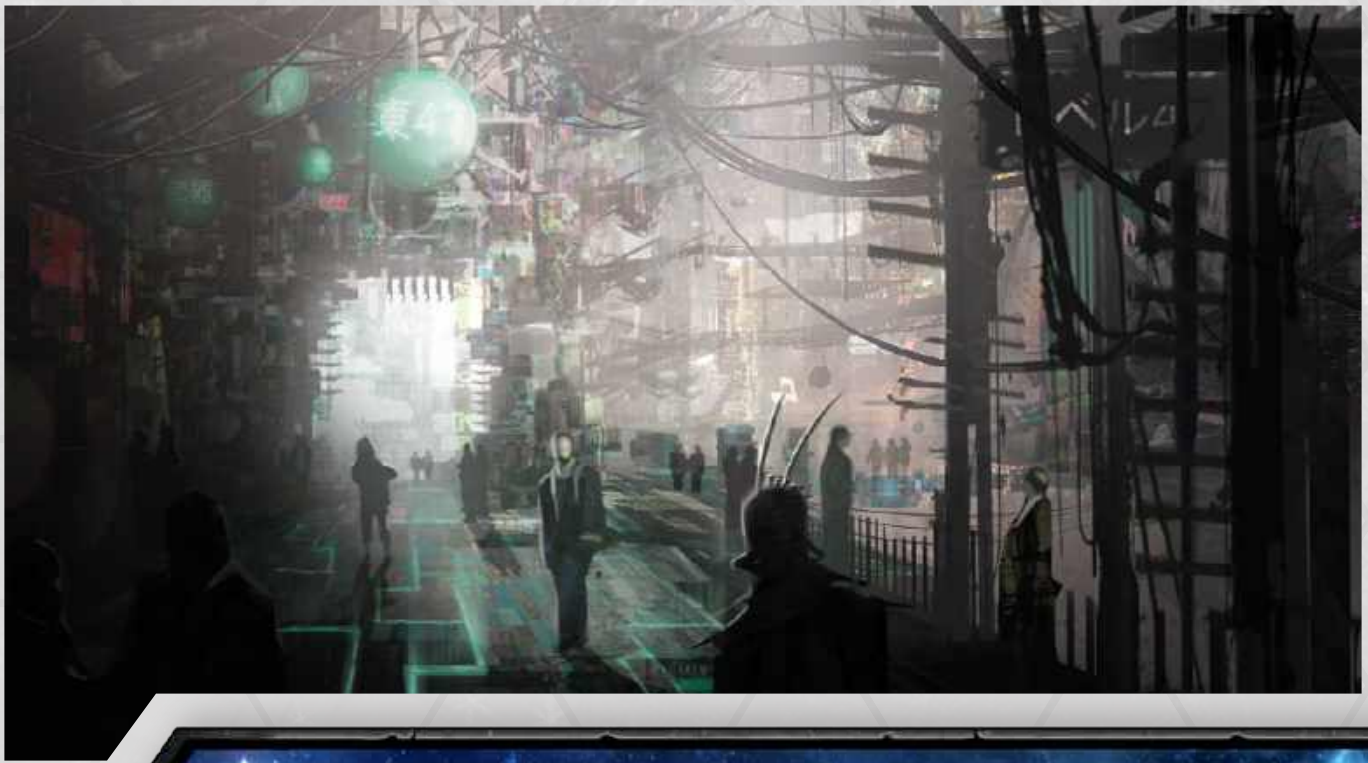
Trade convoys from the Imperium and Aslan Hierate stop here regularly. Just outside StarPort is a sprawling bar/diner called Luddites, where the highest technology used is a robotic washing machine. Starship crew from low-tech worlds can find refuge from technology shock in Luddites, and the Travellers may feel more at home there.

POSSIBLE ENCOUNTERS

1. Lieutenant Herold Nash of the Imperial Navy. A brash young officer out of Pax Rulin, he is eager to cross swords with some of those dastardly pirates he has heard so much about. His ship, a Gazelle-class escort named *Lionsbane*, is part of a trade convoy heading for the Hierate.

2. Eldreth Vaux, a prospector and explorer. He and his crew work for Imperiallines shipping, on a mission to map the Reach and establish new trade lines. Vaux is an untrustworthy shyster and a coward.

3. Gali Flotaine, a young woman from the Pandora system. She suffers from a rare genetic condition that can be treated only on Tech-World. The General Development Company paid for her treatment here to curry favour with her mother, who is an important politician on Pandora. Flotaine mistrusts GeDeCo, but owes them her life.



4. Klowaaar, an Aslan free trader. He is an exiled male, and suffers from extreme culture shock. He barely understands money or technology, but has been forced to leave the Hierate and start a new career as a trader. He ended up on Tech-World, and is unable to find his way back to his ship because he refuses to talk to robots. If the Travellers want to recruit the poor brute as a crewman, he would jump at the chance. Klowaaar is an excellent soldier and fighter, but useless at everything else.

5. Talbis Doherty, another free trader, and a spy for the General Development Company. Her ship, the *Parrot of Doom*, bounces around Borderland subsector, engaging in speculative trade and adventuring. She is friendly, outgoing, charming - and in the pockets of GeDeCo. Anything the Travellers say to her gets reported to Mr. Cerul.

6. Lemuel Vinus, a researcher from Neumann. He works with the brilliant scientist, Jali Astor. They are both experts in nanotechnology - a field of study banned on their homeworld by the oppressive Shield Church. Vinus is an innocent abroad. He arrived on Tech-World only a few weeks ago, and has never been on a world below TL14. He is quite fascinated by how humans 'used to' live, so he hangs around Luddites with the wide-eyed excitement of a junior anthropologist. At least, he pretends to. For the truth, see The Immortal Protector on page 110-111.

THE GEDECO AGENT

Tech-World may seem like a wonderful playground for scientists, but above the ruling council of technocrats sits the shadowy General Development Corporation. One of their agents, Mr. Cerul, visits the Travellers while they are on Tech-World. Cerul pretends to be a potential patron, and claims to have a mission for the Travellers - a simple delivery run, dropping a cargo of high-tech goods to Byrni, where they will be transferred to a jump-5 courier for the long lonely jump to Villag.

In fact, Cerul's goal is to find out who the Travellers are and what they want on Tech-World. If the Travellers have not had dealings with GeDeCo before, then Cerul's interest is academic; he wants to get to know any potential threats or pawns before they interfere with the company's activities. If they have crossed paths with GeDeCo before, in *The Vorito Gambit* or elsewhere, then they will be operating under assumed names, and Cerul's goal is to determine the Travellers' real identities. If GeDeCo wants the Travellers dead, and Cerul sees through their cover, then the Travellers get chased by GeDeCo robot death squads while on Tech-World. The Scientific Advisory Council can help them escape.

CLOAK AND DAGGER

Officially, Tech-World is an independent colony. StarPort is managed by the General Development Corporation, but the rest of the colony is under the control of the Scientific Advisory Council. GeDeCo is not responsible for the work carried out by the researchers.

That is a convenient fiction. Tech-World is GeDeCo's research hothouse. They may absolve themselves of responsibility for any problems through this legal shadowplay, but they rule the planet. If Tech-World were to defy the wishes of GeDeCo, it would be cut off from the supplies and support it needs to survive.

If the council's plan to open negotiations with Drinax were discovered, the punishment would be severe. Therefore, they need to keep the Travellers' presence here a secret.

While in the middle of some other task - say, arranging payment for refined fuel - Sophia turns to the Travellers.

'Do not ask questions. Behave normally. My masters wish to speak with you. Follow me.'

She leads the Travellers down into the lower levels of StarPort, into areas where the walls are moist, suggesting they have not opened in years. From there, she brings them out into the surrounding town via a metal-lined access tunnel used only by robots.

THE GUARDS

The tunnel ends near a loading yard. The Travellers spot a trio of GeDeCo security troopers there, standing guard over a large cargo container. The guards are bored and not especially vigilant - what do they have to worry about, on a planet where the robots do everything - but the Travellers still need to sneak past with a Difficult (10+) Stealth check (DEX) or otherwise deal with them (they carry laser rifles).

Sophia does not accompany the Travellers past the tunnel exit, but points them in the right direction - out into the warren of robot factories and laboratories. The Travellers spot several other GeDeCo patrols, but can easily avoid them. Sophia's directions lead to a heavily shielded bunker used for weapons testing.

THE SCIENTISTS, IN AN ADVENTURE WITH PIRATES

Waiting for the Travellers are three scientists, the representatives of the council. They are;

- **Dr. Gerret Hodal**, a geneticist from Neumann. An elderly statesman, he is the head of the council and does most of the talking. He has come to mistrust GeDeCo and wants to explore other options for the future of Tech-World.
- **Dr. Jali Astor**, a nanotechnologist from Neumann. She came here looking for a way to cure the nanotechnology swarms that plague her homeworld. She pushed Hodal into contacting the Travellers, and should be the one leading these clandestine negotiations. However, she had a revelation this morning, and her mind is elsewhere. She is clearly not paying attention to the meeting, which visibly irritates Hodal.
- **Dr. Rex Darke**, a roboticist formerly of the University of Regina. Travellers from the Imperium may have heard something about a Dr. Darke, regarding killer robots and a scandal. Between his occasional bouts of maniacal laughter, and habit of rubbing his hands as though plotting the overthrow of the Imperium, Dr. Darke scores highly on the mad scientist checklist.

Hodal explains the status of Tech-World and how it is an independent colony, but supplied and protected exclusively by GeDeCo. They have the technology to provide most of their own needs and, given time, could built their own robot-controlled System Defence Boats. However, doing so would take several months, if not longer. During that transition, Tech-World would be vulnerable. What Hodal needs from the Travellers is;

- Regular shipments of cheap Basic Consumables, Basic Raw Materials, Biochemicals, Petrochemicals, Radioactives and Uncommon Raw Materials.
- At least four System Defence Boats or equivalent, massing at least 300 tons each.
- Protection against any reprisals from GeDeCo.
- A contract that ensures Tech-World will be free to carry out any sort of scientific research without restrictions, even in sensitive fields like psionics or artificial intelligence (Dr. Darke has some really interesting theories about silicon lifeforms on Cymbeline...).

If the Travellers can provide all these, they can negotiate a secret alliance between Tech-World and Drinax. Tech-World will become a Friendly port to pirates. With good Diplomat or Broker checks, the Travellers can bargain Hodal down on some of his requests - perhaps he will take some 'liberated' freighters refitted as Q-ships instead of System Defence Boats, or pay for stolen cargo instead of demanding all his Basic Consumables on a platter. Above all, Hodal wants this arrangement to be kept secret until all the pieces are in place, to forestall any retaliation by GeDeCo. If the Travellers are unfamiliar with the corporation, he explains their Machiavellian ways. GeDeCo may pretend to be a trading firm, but they are the fourth power in the Reach, behind only the Imperium and the Hierate, and more influential than the Floriani.

The Travellers do not have to make a final decision on his proposal immediately. They can sleep on it.

2. THE DEMON UNBOUND

Accommodation in Tech-World is luxurious - and soundproofed. That means the Travellers do not hear the earth-shattering explosion in the distance, nor do they hear the raging inferno. The first they hear about anything is when Dr. Hodal walks through the wall of their room (the wall melts away on command). He is clearly alarmed.

'There's been a terrible accident. Please, we need your help. Quickly, quickly.'

He leads the Travellers down to another access tunnel. As they follow Hodal, he explains what has happened.

- There has been an accident in one of the laboratories. Dr. Jali was working with dangerous nanotech from her homeworld of Neumann, when the containment system failed.
- Dr. Jali is possessed by the nanotech.
- Hodal then corrects himself. 'Possessed' is the wrong word. Not possessed... infected. Back on Neumann, the Shield Church teaches that nanotechnology is the work of demons. He does not believe such things of course...
- Dr. Jali stole a ship from the starport. They are tracking it now, but it will reach the jump limit before they can bring it down. He wants the Travellers to go after Jali and stop her before she spreads the nanotechnological plague.
- Her assistant, Lemuel Vinus, may know more.

THE BURNING LABORATORY

The Travellers find Vinus outside the door to the lab. He is winding bandages around his head and hand, and explains he was burned in the explosion. Nervously, he stammers out that Dr. Jali made some breakthrough with her work in the last two days, and spent every waking minute in the lab.

The lab is on fire, and the automated purge cycle (triggered when any dangerous experiment goes wrong) will soon annihilate everything inside. There is no time to get a suitable robot or drone to search the place - if the Travellers wish to investigate the laboratory, they need to don protective suits themselves and quickly check the ruins before the purge cycle hits.

INVESTIGATING THE LABORATORY

This is an Average (8+) Investigate check (INT). The information gained depends on the Effect of the best roll among the group.

Effect 0: The Travellers find the words SHIELD CHURCH scrawled on one wall. It looks like Dr. Jali scraped the metal with her fingertips, suggesting she is inhumanly strong and tough.

Effect 1-2: The Travellers recover partial security camera footage of the lab accident (Dr. Jali deactivated the lab's link to the rest of Tech-World's security grid, so this is the only visual record of the accident). It shows Jali working with a large machine that anyone with a good Science skill can identify as a nanotech containment crucible. She inserts a sample of dangerous 'swarm' nanotech from her homeworld of Neumann, and then inserts a second sample of some custom-designed nanotech. The two samples mix, and a thousand generations of tiny robots crossbreed inside the crucible. Then alarms flash, and the crucible containment fails. The front of the crucible melts away as the nanotech eats through it. Jali's protective encounter suit also fails to protect her - but instead of pulling her apart molecule by molecule, the nanotech infects her. She staggers to her feet, then moves incredibly quickly towards the door. The Travellers catch a glimpse of her eyes glowing red for an instant.

Effect 3-4: The Travellers manage to examine the nanotech crucible for a few seconds before the purge cycle begins. It appears to have been deliberately sabotaged. (Lemuel's work – he wanted to push Jali's work onwards - and for that it needed a human host).

Effect 5+: The audio in the recording is mostly the sound of explosions and screaming, but just before the accident, Jali whispers the words 'Immortal Protector' under her breath.

If the Investigate check fails with an Effect of -3 or more, then one of the Travellers accidentally comes into contact with 'live' nanotech. The nanoscopic machines dissolve a hole in the Travellers' armour, then infect the skin beneath. The Travellers' DEX is permanently lowered by -1, and their END is permanently increased by +1.

PURGE CYCLE

The automated purification cycle triggers after a few minutes, when Hodal can no longer delay it. Plasma fire incinerates anything left in the laboratory. Then the laboratory itself is dissolved, the intelligent-metal walls closing in and reforming, until the place never existed outside the sealed memory-archives of Tech-World.

Hodal warns that a GeDeCo crash team will soon arrive to investigate the incident. For everyone's sake, it would be best if the Travellers departed immediately. He begs them to go after Dr. Jali and find her before she reveals the existence of the illegal experiments to anyone. Her lab assistant Lemuel volunteers to go with the Travellers.

If the Travellers refuse, then this adventure is over. Lemuel goes after Jali on his own; Hodal withdraws his earlier offer of an alliance, and Tech-World becomes a Hostile port to the pirates.

JALI TRANSFORMED

Dr. Astor was experimenting with a variant of the nanotech infection used by the Shield Church to augment their own Flame Knights. In her case, it increased her strength, speed and agility, but also pushed her survival instincts into overdrive. Her instinctive, autonomic nervous system is now as 'smart' as the conscious mind of a normal person. Instead of a basic fight-or-flight response, her brain is now capable of instinctively and automatically coming up with elaborate responses involving long-term planning and advanced technology. Her higher brain functions only kick in after the adrenaline wears off. Let us put it this way – if you put your hand on a hot electric grill, you jerk your hand away instinctively. If Jali does it, then she jerks her hand away, tracks the power supply for the grill, then precisely smashes the weakest point in the wall to sever the power and shut down the grill… or maybe she jerks her hand away, then kills everyone in the house and burns it down. She will not know until she calms down and consciousness reasserts itself.

In game terms, any threat to Dr. Jali is met with extremely lethal force, and she will not even know she is doing it. The enhanced fight-or-flight autonomic system takes some of her desires into account, but is completely amoral. It is like she has a sociopathic switch.

DR. JALI ASTOR

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	24

				SKILLS
STR	10	INT	13	Admin 1, Astrogation 1, Deception 1, Electronics (computers) 3, Engineer (jump) 1, Investigate 0, Jack-of-all-Trades 1, Mechanic 0, Melee (unarmed) 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Science (biology) 4, Science (chemistry) 4, Science (robotics) 3, Science (electronics) 2, Vacc Suit 0
DEX	9	EDU	14	
END	14	SOC	8	

EQUIPMENT	Gauss Pistol (3D, AP 3, Auto 2), Vacc Suit (10) with Vislight Chameleon (DM-4 to spot)
AUGMENTS	Subdermal Armour (3), Drug Gland (produce Combat Drug or Slow Drug at will), Fight-or-Flight Response* * When threatened, Jali gains Athletics (dexterity) 3, Gun Combat (slug) 3, Melee (unarmed) 3, Recon 3 and Stealth 3.

Playing Jali (as Jali)

- Your mind works faster than most. Get frustrated when people do not understand.
- Finish other people's sentences.
- Compulsively check your hand computer.

Playing Jali (in combat mode)

- Stand on the balls of your feet.
- Bare your teeth, like a predator.
- Speak only in clipped sentences.

3. CHASING HORRORS

Jali stole a jump-2 far trader, the *Lord Gerald's Fancy*, and did not have time to plot a new jump solution. The *Fancy* was en route to Exe, two parsecs away from Tech-World. The hunt starts there.

LEMUEL VINUS

Jali's young assistant accompanies the Travellers on their journey. If they quibble, he points out that he can tell them about both Jali's nanotech experiments and her homeworld of Neumann. Jali was working on a way to stop or control the nanotech swarms that plague their homeworld, so Lemuel suspects she is on her way there. On the off chance the Travellers refuse to take Lemuel with them, he stows away on board. If they shoot him... well, Lemuel is not what he seems.

Play Lemuel for comic relief. He is earnest, eager to help, and largely incompetent at everything. His carrot-coloured hair is absurdly unruly, and he has the co-ordination and grace of a beached whale crossed with a giraffe. Likely topics of conversation with him include;

- **Dr. Jali:** Lemuel describes Jali as a genius, one of the bravest scientists he has ever known. The Shield Church of Neumann bans certain fields of research, so Dr. Jali had to fight and work underground to study nanotechnology. She was fiercely determined to save her planet from the machine plagues. She was passionate – but never violent or irrational. He suspects that the nanotech infection has affected her thought processes.
- **Jali's Work:** She was trying to develop a cure or control for the nanotech swarms. Many scientists tried to find such a cure in the past, before the Shield Church put an end to such dangerous experiments. Jali believed the swarms were essentially malfunctioning programs, and could be controlled given the right inputs. She was working with nanotech stolen from the Shield Church, and he knows it connects to the autonomic nervous system. If she feels threatened, she may become extremely dangerous.
- *Stopping Jali:* Lemuel asks that the Travellers refrain, if possible, from using lethal force on her. She is not herself. He believes they can convince her to listen to reason, and that provoking her will trigger a hostile response.
- **Neumann:** The world of Neumann (see *The Trojan Reach* page 147) was a Solomani colony. The planet was a shining jewel of technological advancement to rival the Darrian civilisation, until a disaster released a 'grey goo' hegemonising swarm. The ruling AIs committed suicide, unable to find a solution for the plague. All hope seemed lost, until the arrival of the Shield Church.
- **The Shield Church:** The Shield Church rules Neumann. The priests of the Church have their own nanotech swarms that can break down and block hostile swarms. The Church rules every aspect of life on the planet, and bans any scientific research that might bring back the dark days. The head of the Shield Church is the Immortal Protector.
- **The Immortal Protector:** The mysterious Immortal Protector is the master of the Church. He is reborn once every generation. He is rarely seen in public, and always wears his ceremonial mask and armour. The Immortal Protector's will guides the people of Neumann, and it is his holy Church that shields them against the swarms.

Jali did not believe in the Immortal Protector, and said he was a myth perpetuated by the Shield Church, a figurehead used to keep the ordinary people of Neumann from questioning Church policy. Lemuel agrees with her… but says he finds it hard to give up the myths of his childhood. He was raised to honour and love the Protector. If asked for further details, Lemuel tells the tale of the Immortal Protector.

The Tale of the Immortal Protector

Once upon a time, the scientists of Neumann believed that machines could solve all their problems. They created thinking machines to do their thinking for them, and building machines to make everything they needed. Their whole world became one great union of machines, and people just seemed like an unnecessary distraction.

Then something went wrong. The building machines turned on the people, and went mad. They killed billions and billions of people, dissolving them into goo and using their remains to build more building machines. The thinking machines could not see a way to solve the problem, and kept thinking and thinking until the building machines devoured them too.

Now, one of the people killed in that plague was a woman, a traveller from afar, named Nuwia, and as she died, she called out the name of her lover. That name is forgotten, for now we know him only as the Immortal Protector.

Then the Immortal Protector came down from the stars, in a ship of silver fire. He was a wanderer and a hero. Some say he was the last Emperor of the First Imperium, exiled from his throne by the Solomani upstarts. Others say he was half-human, and half-Ancient, that his mother was an archaeologist who found an Ancient tomb on a deserted dead world. Whoever he was, he was a man without peer. He stood eight feet tall, and wielded a FGMP in each hand. He burned back the swarms with the fury of his fusion guns, and fought his way to the last laboratory. There, he found more slumbering swarms, and – for he was as great a scholar as he was warrior – he commanded the swarms to block the building machines from encroaching any further onto Neumann.

The surviving scientists were made to swear an oath never to interfere with the protections set in place by the Protector, and he established the Shield Church to watch over his work. So it is by his grace that everyone on Neumann lives to this very day.

DEAD SHIP

In the Exe system, the Travellers initially find no trace of *Lord Gerald's Fancy*. The Exe starport has no record of the ship arriving in the system; a Difficult (10+) Persuade check convinces the starport tech to let slip that they did detect a jump signature a few hours ago, but the incoming ship headed towards the system's gas giant, Artobin, instead of visiting the port. Exe is a small waystation, and does not have the resources to track every stray signal.

Scanning the gas giant requires a Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (sensors) check (EDU). If the check succeeds, the Travellers detect *Lord Gerald's Fancy* skimming the gas giant's atmosphere to obtain hydrogen fuel. They also detect another ship, the *Vagabond Soul,* a far trader class merchant. The latter ship is drifting out of control in a decaying orbit around Artobin. It looks like she is intact, but unmanned. If the Electronics (sensors) check fails, then the Travellers detect only the *Vagabond Soul* at this point, and pick up *Fancy* as she jumps out.

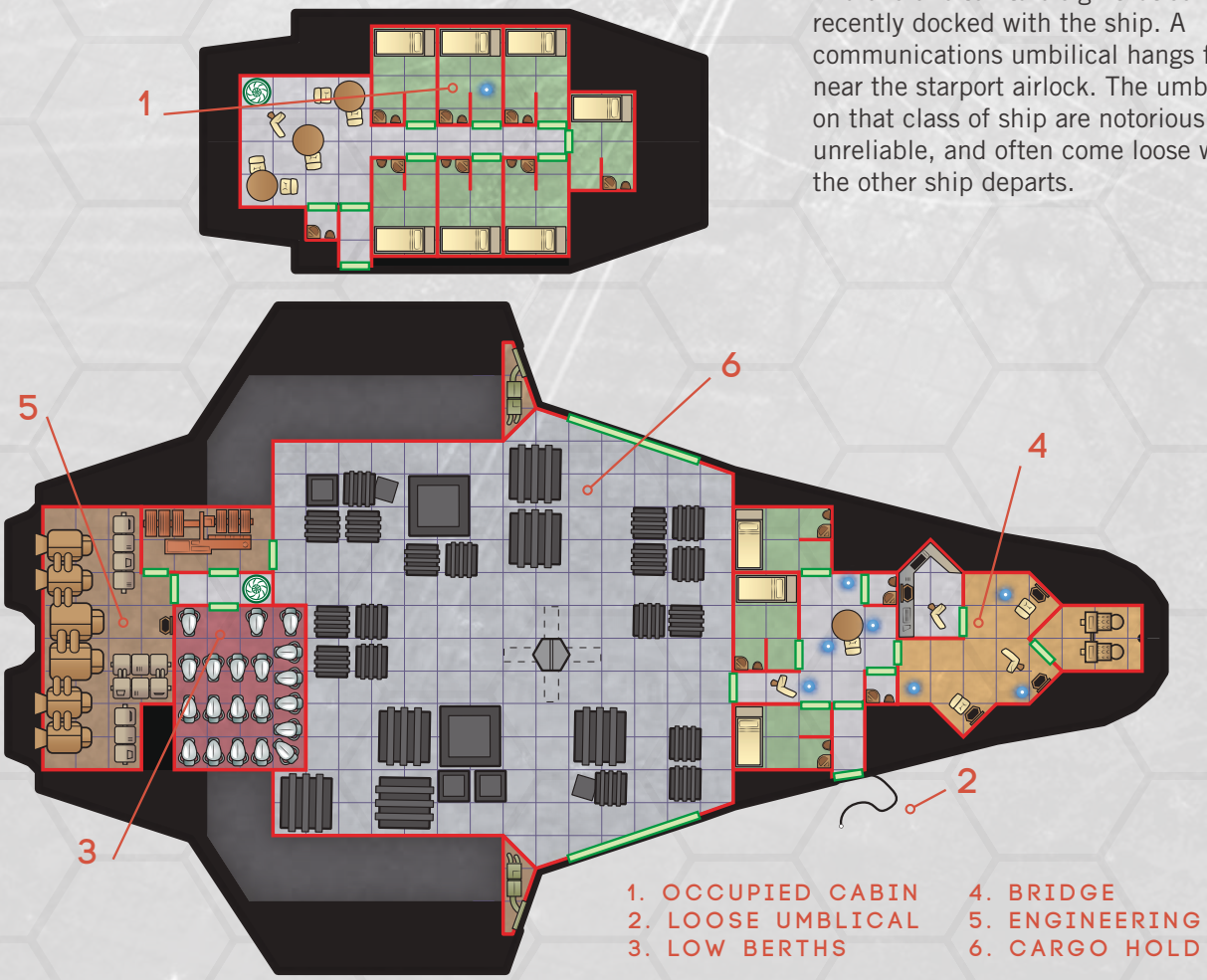
CHASING FANCY

If the Travellers detect *Fancy* early, then Dr. Jali makes a break for it. Her fuel tanks are partially full of unrefined hydrogen, so she tries to burn hard for the jump limit. She has already calculated her jump solution for her next destination, Cordan. If she can reach the 100-diameter jump limit of the gas giant in time, then she jumps with DM-2 from her unrefined fuel. If she jumps within the limit, she misjumps - the referee should displace her by 1Dx1D parsecs in a random direction.

VAGABOND SOUL

Once the Travellers are within range, they can scan the *Vagabond Soul* in detail. She appears undamaged. There are life-signs on board, but they are oddly muted - the best guess is that the eight remaining crew are in suspended animation, but as they are scattered around the ship (three on the bridge, four in the common area, one in a cabin), they must have taken fast drug instead of climbing into low berths. From the ship's mass, she must have a nearly full cargo bay.

There is one tell-tale sign that someone recently docked with the ship. A communications umbilical hangs free near the starport airlock. The umbilicals on that class of ship are notoriously unreliable, and often come loose when the other ship departs.



1. OCCUPIED CABIN
2. LOOSE UMBLICAL
3. LOW BERTHS
4. BRIDGE
5. ENGINEERING
6. CARGO HOLD

What Happened Here?

One of the passengers on the *Vagabond Soul* was Olim Bayl, a trader from Neumann. Jali recognised the ship and docked with it to speak to Bayl. Well, 'speak' is beyond Jali in her current form, but she was able to get what she needed from him – the location of the nearest Shield Church archon.

The crew of the *Vagabond Soul* tried to stop her, and she instinctively released a nanotech virus. Similar weapons were seen on Neumann, centuries ago, during the worst days of the swarms. They turn humans into living weapons. Nanotech strips metal from any available sources (in this case, the corridors and bulkheads of the *Vagabond Soul* are pitted with tiny scars) and coats the victims in armoured scales. Useless organs dissolve; their organic molecules are used to assemble combat-drug glands and backup hearts.

The far trader is a ship of the living dead.

Before Jali left, she sabotaged the main computer, ensuring no survivor could follow her.

THE CURSED

Exploring the *Vagabond Soul* is like wandering into a haunted house. Light and gravity flicker on and off. The air is icy cold. Everywhere, there are signs of carnage and brutal slaughter. Blood splatters every surface.

The Cursed – the eight surviving nanotech-altered crew – are things out of nightmare. They have no eyes or mouths; they see in millimetre-wave radar and scream in radio frequencies. Their skin is covered in silvery scales; their fingertips bristle with thousands of elongated needles that secrete neurotoxin. They move like lizards, scuttling along rooftops or springing down corridors in zero gravity.

As soon the Travellers find one of the Cursed, it screams. The Travellers hear this scream as a burst of static on their radios. The other Cursed then begin to hunt them. They co-ordinate with each other with more radio-bursts, and retain enough intelligence to use weapons and tactics (like circling behind the Travellers to block the path to the airlock).

CURSED

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human?	-	-

STR	12	INT	5	SKILLS
DEX	9	EDU	5	Gun Combat 0, Melee (natural) 2, Stealth 2, Tactics (military) 3
END	12	SOC	0	

EQUIPMENT	Armour 8, Engineered (TL15), Hand Spines (1D, poison Very Difficult END check, 1D INT and 1D DEX, 1D minutes)

Bayl's Cabin

This is the only occupied passenger cabin. If present, Lemuel exclaims that he knew Olim Bayl – the trader visited Tech-World sometimes, and brought news from home. Jali disliked him because Bayl was a fervent member of the Shield Church.

The first thing the Travellers find in the cabin is a leather-bound copy of the Shield Church Bible, and tucked into the First Testament of the Immortal Protector is a flyer for an interfaith conference to be held on the planet Mirage (0509 Gazulin). One of the attendees will be Archon Dreek of the Shield Church.

Salvaging the Vagabond Soul

Jali smashed the main computer and scrambled the backup systems before leaving. It can be fixed with a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computer) or Mechanic check (INT, 1D x 10 hours), but the ship will fall into the gas giant's gravity well and burn up within 12 hours. The Travellers can try salvaging the ship by hastening these repairs, or by towing it out, or by trying to fly it out manually with a Very Difficult (12+) Pilot check (DEX). Alternatively, they can just loot the 50 tons of Petrochemicals in her hold and escape.

4. THE CHASE

Jali's course goes from Tech-World to Exe, and from there onto Mirage. Her planned course goes Cordon (0401/Borderlands), Wildeman (0409/Tobia), Fist (0508/Tobia) (see In the Shadow of Tobia, page 112), Imisaa (0506/Tobia), Sabruse (0505/Tobia), Saurus (0403/Tobia), Intelia (0202/Tobia), Empire (0301/Tobia), Susanawo (0510/Gazulin) and finally Mirage (0509/Gazulin), for a total of 11 jumps. All the systems visited have gas giants, and Jali intends to refuel in the wilderness each time.

The far trader has plenty of supplies, and Jali can put down on relatively deserted worlds for food and water as needed (or raid other ships). Her madness drives her on.

TRACKING JALI

The Travellers have no easy way to track Jali after she jumps from Exe. They can try doggedly pursuing her, jumping as she jumps and hoping to pick her up in the next system before she refuels and jumps again. However, space is big, a ship is small, and the variation in jump transit time (148+6D hours) means it is unlikely that the Travellers will see her again before Mirage.

A Very Difficult (12+) Astrogation check (INT) lets an astrogator guess the likeliest destination of a jumping ship based on neutrino emissions and the shape of the inflating hydrogen bubble, but this is more an art than a science. Picking up on the neutrino emissions requires a Difficult (10+) Electronics (sensors) check (INT).

If the Travellers have access to a network of allies or spies, they could send the word out ahead on the X-Boat network once they reach Imperial space, or they could split up and take multiple ships as they hunt Jali.

Giving Up

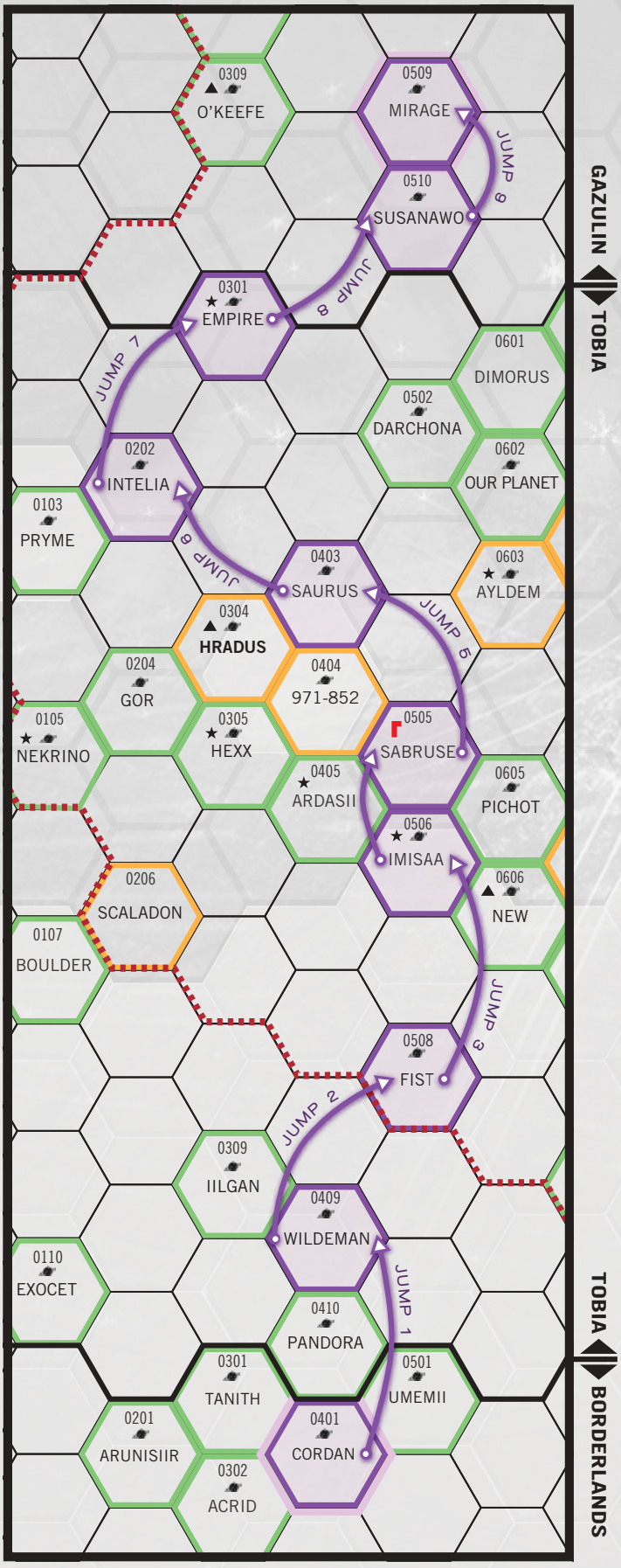
Hunting one woman across thirty parsecs of space may test the patience of Travellers, especially if they feel they have more pressing matters to attend to back on Drinax. If this comes up, there are several ways to handle it.

- **Send in the B-Team:** The Travellers could split up. Some (or even none) of the Travellers could go in search of Jali, and the others can roll up temporary Travellers to play through the rest of the adventure. For example, one Travellers could accompany Lemuel, and recruit another band of adventurers on Cordan or some other border world. The scope of The Pirates of Drinax is big enough to have several groups of Travellers – if an adventures does not suit the original set of Travellers who started the campaign back on Drinax, then maybe it would work with some of their new hirelings and followers.
- **A Quiet Season Back Home:** The referee may rule that no significant events happen while the Travellers are en route to Mirage, letting them chase Jali with a clear conscience.
- **It's Your Sandbox, But…:** The final option is to let the Travellers do as they wish. If they want to abandon this adventure and try something else, let them. Events unfold without them – in this case, Jali dies on Mirage, her research is lost, and Tech-World withdraws its offer of an alliance.

CONFRONTING JALI

Since the accident, Jali has been under the effect of her enhanced fight-or-flight response. The trauma of the accident brought her half-way across the sector before she calmed down enough to think clearly. If the Travellers attack or threaten her, she may lurch back into her combat state. Speaking to her calmly (possibly with a Persuade or Diplomat check) lets her explain herself.

- She was working on a way to control the nanotech swarms that plague Neumann. This research is banned by the Shield Church, but she thinks she has found a way to reprogram the swarms.
- Ironically, her work depends on the 'holy gifts of the Immortal Protector' – a safe strain of nanotech used by the Shield Church. She believes she can adapt the programming used in this nanotech to interface with the chaotic swarms and shut them down.
- There are several grades of gift. She was working with the combat upgrades used by the Flame Knights, the monks who fight and extirpate swarm infestations. However, she now believes she needs Archon-grade nanotech.
- Archon-grade tech is closely guarded by the Church. They will not give it up – so she is going to take it from an Archon.
- It is all horribly dangerous, illegal and – in the eyes of the church – demoniacal, but she believes she can save Neumann from being slowly eaten away by its own lost technology. Her world can be a shining jewel of progress again – but she needs the Travellers' help to do it.
- She never meant to kill anyone. The nanotech she uses has a built-in defence mechanism. She cannot switch it off, not without Archon-level controls.



The Truth of the Immortal Protector

It is written in the Shield Church Bible that the swarm arose by mischance. It is written that the twelve Artificial Intelligences that guided the sinful, godless science-society of old committed suicide when they were unable to solve the problem of survival, and it is written that the Immortal Protector came from the stars to save mankind.

All lies.

1,500 years ago, an archaeological team in the Trojan Reach found an Ancient relic and brought it back to Neumann for study. The twelve ruling AIs examined it, and eleven of them came to the same conclusion – the artifact contained a blueprint for a transcendence engine. It described how to encode information in the structure of jump space itself, how to reconcile psionics with physics, and how to transform living minds into beings of pure thought, immortal godlings to whom thought and deed would be a single act.

The twelfth AI disagreed with these conclusions. It is too good to be true, it argued, this is a berserker trick, a booby trap left behind by a previous civilisation. If you are smart enough to build this thing, then you are a danger to them. This thing does not transcend – it will just kill us all. The other eleven AIs did not heed this warning, and began to assemble the transcendence engine.

What could the twelfth AI do? It hacked into the assemble nanotech and commanded it to stop. The other AIs tried to override the hacking, and in the ensuing cyberwar, the nanotech received trillions of contradictory commands. The twelfth, in a desperate attempt to even the odds, commanded the nanotech to attack the infrastructure of the other AIs. They tried to counter this in turn, but the nanotech was already in their systems, and they were partially deconstructed even as they ordered their own reconstruction. The nanotech blindly flailed around, devouring whole continents in an effort to simultaneously make and unmake the machine and the AIs. Chaos reigned.

The surviving AI feared the retribution of the humans, so it hid its core. It had access to cloning tanks, so it cloned a flesh-avatar drone for itself, a human with cybernetic implants that it could control like a puppet. This drone was the first Immortal Protector, and when it aged to death, the AI made another and another and another, for thirty generations.

And for all that time, it has wondered if it was right.

The other eleven AIs and their supposed transcendence engine are still out there, in the churning molecular soup of the swarm zone. Sometimes, one of these AIs reasserts itself for a brief period, when enough of the confused nanotech swarms work together to build a semi-functioning computer core. The Immortal Protector's agents in the Shield Church swiftly respond by commanding the nanotech to unmake the computers again, but their patterns still exist. There are eleven mad would-be gods in the swarm, and the Immortal Protector fears their judgment just as it fears the judgment of humanity.

Lemuel Volin is the current incarnation of the Immortal Protector. Most of his consciousness is in a hidden mainframe beneath the Shield Cathedral, but the drone has enough intelligence to act independently. It hoped that Jali's research might give it a way of seizing control of the nanotech swarm and ending the chaos once and for all, but it cannot be sure if Jali's solution will work. It needs certainty – if Jali's solution were tried and it failed, it could give the eleven other AIs a chance to rebuild themselves and finish their transcendence engine, and who knows what would happen then…

LEMUEL VOLIN
THE PROTECTOR

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Computer Controled Drone			Male	1,500+
STR	15	**INT**	15	**SKILLS**
DEX	10	**EDU**	15	*Astrogation, Broker, Deception, Drive (any), Electronics (any), Engineer (any), Explosives, Flyer (any), Gambler, Gunner (turret), Gun Combat (any), Heavy Weapons (any), Language (any), Mechanic, Medic, Pilot (any), Science, Steward, Tactics (any), Vacc Suit.
END	18	**SOC**	12	
EQUIPMENT				Armour 4, Autopistol (3D-3) or FGMP-16 (2DD, Radiation)

*Lemuel has access to virtually any skill in software format while on Neumann. In the field, though, he is limited by the capacity of his android drone's brain. He may have any twelve of the following skills at level 2;

For most of this adventure, Lemuel stays in the background. Play him as comic relief, or a way to describe how nanotech worlds, or explain the Shield Church and other aspects of Neumann culture. He wants to see what Jali intends to do, and to determine how effective her discovery is. Lemuel intercedes to keep Jali from being killed, or protect himself, or prevent anyone tampering with the delicate balance of the swarms. He tries to keep his true identity a secret, so if he can fulfil his goals without revealing his powers, he does so. However, he can unmask himself if he has to.

IN THE SHADOW OF TOBIA

Until the Travellers reach Fist, they are outside Imperial space. True, some of the systems close to the Imperial border are Imperium in all but name, but the Travellers are outside the law of the Iridium Throne. Once they cross into the Imperium, though, they may be wanted criminals in every port. Check the Travellers' Standing with the Imperium. If it is -6 or lower, then every law enforcement agency in the Sector has an outstanding arrest warrant for the notorious pirates. Apply 1/5th of the Travellers' Standing as a negative DM to any Law Level checks (see page 224 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*). For example, if a Travellers with a Standing of -20 was seen in Imperial space, they would have DM-4 to all interactions with the law, and DM+4 to all sentencing rolls.

Travellers voyaging in disguise may avoid the effects of their Standings, but need false documents or cover identities.

ALTERNATE TRANSPORT

A distinctive ship like the *Harrier* may be a liability when travelling in the Imperium. Canny Travellers may choose to take a captured ship, or travel to Mirage using hired passage instead of their own ship. The standard Imperium-Hierate trade route runs through Borderland and Tobia subsectors, so the Travellers can easily find passage as far as Fist. From there, ships travel regularly between most worlds.

OPPORTUNITIES

There is little opportunity for piracy and larceny while in the stuffy, button-down, high-security Imperium. However, if the Travellers keep their ears open, they may encounter one or more of the following opportunities.

1. A former pirate, Lran Smeck, now lives near the starport on Fist. For the right price, he can keep track of shipping patterns and convoys, and send word to waiting pirates about potential targets.

2. Hearing that the Travellers come from the Reach, an unscrupulous investor named Borja asks if they have any high-yield business opportunities. He has the money if they have a way to use it profitably.

3. In a gossip column, the Travellers learn that the nephew of the baron of Gazulin (rumoured to be fabulously wealthy) intends to go on safari to the wild worlds of the Reach. He is travelling incognito to avoid kidnappers and thieves.

4. Agents of the Florian Trade Company (see *The Trojan Reach* page 130) contact the Travellers with an offer. They are willing to pay protection money if the Travellers can ensure that none of their ships suffer from pirate attacks. The more worlds the Travellers guarantee as safe, the bigger the payment (Cr0.5 per ton of cargo per system on the Florian Trade route made completely safe).

5. A drunken Scout claims to know the location of the *Yarrow*, a 50,000 ton megafreighter that misjumped in 1099. He says that the Tobia Commerce Guild faked the misjump and claimed the insurance on the ship and cargo, and they are just waiting a few years before bringing her back into service under a new name. Right now, that 50,000-ton ship is sitting in an obscure system, almost completely unprotected…

6. A nervous corporate executive working for PRQ asks the Travellers for advice. She has been asked to revise the language in the company's anti-piracy policy, and needs help understanding certain tricky concepts…

5. THE SANDS OF MIRAGE

The desert world of Mirage was bypassed by the first wave of settlements. The arid planet is nearly devoid of water, and a prospecting team that visited the planet failed to find any signs of useful minerals.

Centuries later, a consortium of investors tried to grow dust-spice on Mirage for the Aslan market. Dust-spice thrives on only a few worlds, and they believed that with the right irrigation and artificial culturing techniques, they could produce spice on Mirage too. They failed, but in the course of their efforts discovered the true wealth of the planet. The sands of Mirage contain tiny burrowing insects that, when crushed and processed, yield an intoxicating hallucinogen called Mirage-liquor. This drug differs from other narcotics in that it allows directed dreaming. Drink the waters of Mirage, and you will become the master of your own dreams for a few hours, enjoying any experience you can imagine with perfect clarity and perfect recall.

The consortium of spice farmers fell apart, as each landowner jealously guarded his patch of sand-bugs. Today, the descendants of those farmers are stupendously wealthy, as the liquor is shipped in controlled amounts for use in psychotherapy, and in huge vats for illegal trafficking.

THE MARQUISE D'HAUBE

'Marquise' is an affectation; this wealthy woman has no official noble title beyond Dame (SOC 11), but money buys respect. Her mansion – grown from pink crystal – rises over the desert like a fever-dream brought on by too much sugar. Recently, the Marquise has developed an allergy to her anagathic drug of choice, and has begun to age again. She hides these signs of aging behind expensive treatments, so she still looks as perfect as always, but the cold hand of mortality has brushed against her dusky cheek, and she now wishes to know which religion is the correct one.

Therefore, she volunteered to host this century's Sector-wide Interfaith Conference on Religious Diversity. These conferences are seen as a tiresome necessity by the Imperial Bureaucracy. Each world has the right to follow (or suppress) whatever bizarre faiths they wish, but sometimes religion intersects with the Imperium's rule of the space between worlds. Proselytising at starports, burial in space, cults that break some other Imperial law such as restrictions on psionic use, interstellar pilgrimages – all these things must be argued and discussed at tedious length.

For the bureaucrats, it is a painful headache, and if Marquise D'Haube wants to take over some of the costs and paperwork, wonderful. May the divine entity of her choice bless her in a non-specific way.

For Marquise D'Haube, it is a chance to speak to the representatives of a hundred different faiths, so she can work out which one is correct and thus avoid the oblivion of death.

For the representatives of a hundred different faiths, the conference is many things – a solemn duty, a chance to settle scores, the opportunity to redress grievous ills, an all-expenses-paid junket to a pleasure planet, a political prize, an annoying distraction…

For Jali, it is a chance to hunt an Archon.

JALI'S PLAN

Archon Dreek is the Shield Church's representative at the conference. He came with a squad of four Flame Knights, the augmented warriors of the Church, who serve as his honour guard. Marquise D'Haube assigned Dreek a villa some distance outside the main settlement of Haubercity, as Dreek requested privacy and solitude. The villa is situated in a scenic irrigated valley, and protected by the Marquise's security drones as well as the Flame Knights. Each day, Dreek and two of his knights travel by air/raft to Haubercity to attend the conference. One of the Marquise's servants, a young chauffeur named Jek, pilots the air/raft. He wears the traditional uniform of a Miragian flyer, which includes a full-face mask and heavy cloak.

Jali's plan is to sneak into Hauberville, eliminate Jek, and steal his uniform. She will then wait for the Archon and his guards and fly them out into the desert. At the right moment, she will eject the two guards, then attack Dreek and obtain the nanotech she needs.

INTERACTIONS ON MIRAGE

This section of the adventure can unfold in many different ways. The most likely situation is that the Travellers watch the Archon until Jali shows herself, or else track her to her ship and find Jek's body.

Hauberville is normally a dull provincial town, the same shops and buildings and facilities one finds on any Imperial world from Gazulin to Capital. Most of Hauberville's culture and style is imported from Gazulin, and the colony is effectively a boring suburb of the Trojan Reach's most fashionable and effete world. However, the presence of so many diverse religions adds colour and life to the town, at least for a few weeks.

- **Landing:** Mirage's Class A starport has very limited docking space available, so the Travellers are asked to land in one of the many bays on the outskirts of the port. Due to the ongoing Imperial conference, security at the port is heightened, and includes Imperial Marines in battle dress with grav assist and heavy weapons. Starting a fight at this starport is immensely unwise.
- **Access to the Conference:** Only accredited representatives of the faiths, officials of the Imperial Bureaucracy, and guests of Marquise D'Haube are permitted access to the conference centre. The Travellers can sneak or bluff their way in, but both are Formidable (14+) challenges.
- **The Marquise:** The Marquise has a limited number of guest passes to the conference. Travellers who impress her witha Very Difficult (12+) Carouse check (SOC) may be offered a pass. So far, the Marquise has not identified the one true religion that she seeks.
  - **Playing the Marquise:** You are wonderfully bored and decadent, but have had to confront your own mortality for the first time, so underneath the drugs and the champagne and the gold-plated pet frogs you are scared and desperate for meaning.
  - If the Travellers bring the Shield Church to her attention, then she becomes interested in rumours of the Immortal Protector. Unlike most of the mystic faiths, the Shield Church has solid scientific underpinnings, even if they refer to their nanotech as 'demonology.' Perhaps, the Marquise wonders, the Church could be persuaded to share its nanotechnological anagathic treatments in exchange for a favour.
- **Archon Dreek:** The sacred duty of the Shield Church is to protect Neumann from the insidious corruption of the nanotech swarms. It is not to go on 'junkets' to desert resorts. Archon Dreek would much prefer to be battling the swarms in a contaminated death zone to this… decadence. He is a frightfully gaunt man, who speaks like a drill sergeant who retired after developing throat cancer. He knows of Tech-World. It is an abomination, a coven of science-sorcerers who defy the proclamations and edicts of the Immortal Protector. It should be destroyed! And if this Jali came from there, she too will burn.
  - **Playing Dreek:** Despise everything around you. Twitch with the desire to burn it all.
  - Dreek possesses counter-nanotech that can deactivate other swarms. If he has a chance to use this on Jali, he can remove her infection and restore her to full sanity. However, he wants her dead, not cured.
- **Finding *Lord Gerald's Fancy*:** The far trader can be found easily by checking starport records, or by scouting around the docking pads. Jali landed her ship a little distance outside Hauberville. On board are three more of the Cursed walking corpses (former thugs that Jali ran into at Wildeman, who attacked her and paid the price), and the unconscious and naked form of Jek, the air/raft driver. If revived, he explains that he was ambushed after dropping the Archon off at the conference in his air/raft.
- **The Ambush:** If Jali's plan works, then she drops the two Flame Knights off by the simple expedient

ARCHON DREEK

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	45

STR	6 (7)	INT	10 (12)	SKILLS
DEX	7 (8)	EDU	11	Admin 2, Advocate 2, Deception 1, Diplomat 2, Electronics (computers) 3, Engineer 0, Flyer (grav) 2, Gun Combat 0, Heavy Weapons (man portable) 2, Investigate 3, Language 1, Medic 2, Persuade 3, Pilot 0, Recon 1, Science (theology) 4
END	12 (15)	SOC	11	

EQUIPMENT	Laser Pistol (3D+3), Robes (8)
AUGMENTS	Subdermal Armour (3), Archon-Class Nanotech (END+3, INT+2, STR+1, DEX+1, DM+4 to resist nanotech infections)

FLAME KNIGHT

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	-	-

STR	15 (16)	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	12 (13)	EDU	9	Vacc Suit 2, Drive 0, Gun Combat (varies) 2, Electronics (computers) 1, Heavy Weapons (man portable) 2, Investigate 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Recon 2, Survival 2.
END	12 (15)	SOC	8	

EQUIPMENT	FGMP-15 (2DD, Radiation), Battle Dress (25) with Grav Assist and Vislight Chameleon (DM-4 to spot)
AUGMENTS	Subdermal Armour (3), Knight-Class Nanotech (END+3, STR+1, DEX+1, DM+4 to resist nanotech infections)

of turning the air/raft upside down at the right moment, then flies off to confront Dreek. Extracting Dreek's nanotech would be harmless if he did not fight back; unfortunately, he does fight back, triggering her fight-or-flight reaction.

Intercepting Jali before she picks up the Archon and his two bodyguards forces her to escape across Hauberville. Her backup plan is to attack the Archon's villa under cover of darkness (and if forced into fight-or-flight, then she adds 'with my legion of Cursed soldiers converted from sand-bug farm workers').

Intercepting her after she grabs the Archon means a high-speed chase across the desert. Jali's chances of escape in such a situation are remote, but she will try nonetheless.

- **Confronting Jali:** See page 118 for what happens when the Travellers speak to Dr. Jali Astor.
- **Capturing Jali:** If the Travellers capture Jali, they can hand her over to the Shield Church (which means execution) or do as she begs and take her to Neumann. Alternatively, Lemuel volunteers to take her back to Neumann on board the *Lord Gerald's Fancy,* claiming he knows other underground scientists who can cure the infection. Just before the far trader takes off, Jali realises it was Lemuel who sabotaged her experiment, and screams at the Travellers for help.

Lemuel's Intercession

Lemuel wants Jali to succeed. If she can control the swarms, then his long vigil over Neumann can come to an end – but only if her solution is absolutely unquestionable and perfect. Therefore, Lemuel will try to help Jali as much as he can without giving away his identity and without letting her actually put her plan into operation.
He might;

- Send her a warning about the Travellers' plans
- Move the *Lord Gerald's Fancy* so she can use it to escape
- Sabotage the Travellers' movements
- In his guise as the Immortal Protector, order Dreek to use his Archons to stop the Travellers

6. THE SWARM ZONE

If she obtains the Archon-class nanotechnology, then Jali returns to her ship (or tries to steal another) and heads for Neumann. Her jump-2 far trader has to take the long route (going via Fintor/0407, Peridot/0405 and Iscand/0504), but a jump-3 ship can go via Ploderash/0707) and get there more than two weeks sooner.

NEUMANN

Tens of billions of people crowd into the shining cities of Neumann. Here is technology at its height – buildings float on gravity platforms, servitor drones flit through the crowds, and every imaginable wonder is at hand. If Gazulin with its museums and fashion houses and high culture is the Paris of the Trojan Reach, then Neumann is a million Akihabaras crammed onto a single world, a cybernetic hive of virtually infinite complexity. Everything is incredibly clean and precisely organised; it is a world of straight lines and engineered curves, of polished metal and chrome.

Visitors are usually too overwhelmed to notice the dark figures in armour – the Flame Knights – who lurk on the fringes of the crowd. Nor do they notice the horror that spreads through the crowds when a single speck of dirt or mould is found anywhere. That stain on a wall could be the first sign of a swarm zone breakthrough, and must be cleaned with atomic fire.

Out beyond the hermetic perfection of the steel cities is the swarm zone. Ships descending to Neumann usually switch off their external cameras, to avoid showing visitors the disturbing view. More than half the planet is covered in swarm-zone.

Imagine a churning ocean of grey goo that boils and sets and sublimes once again, shifting shape and colour and state faster than the eye can follow. Forms emerge out of the churning slime, then fall back again, dissolving. Buildings, structures, machines - people too - are partially born out of the formless chaos and then vanish again, leaving parts or traces of themselves behind to be recombined again. This is the aftermath of the grey goo disaster that wiped out Neumann's golden age. This is what the Immortal Protector guards against.

THE SWARM CLOUD

The closest swarm zone to the starport is a region called Marina's Land. It was once home to some of Neumann's most densely populated cities, before the swarm dissolved them. The Shield Church has a fortress here, Bulwark 17, and it is here that Jali tries to implement her solution to the problem of the swarm.

She believes her altered form of the Archon nanotech will allow her to filter the programs running in the swarm, so the nanotech robots act in concert instead of following multiple contradictory programs. If she is right, then as soon as she exerts control over the swam, they should all start building the same thing.

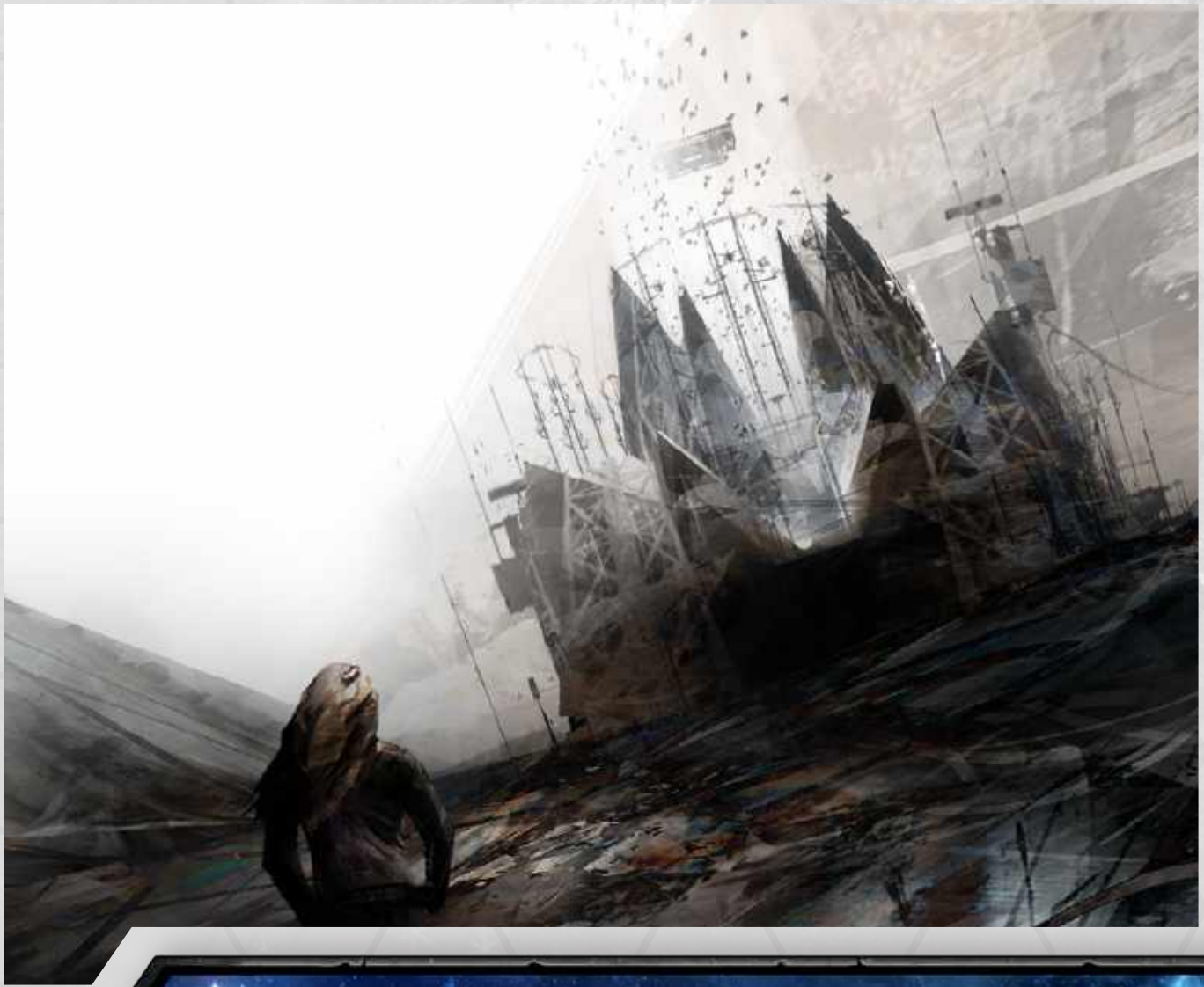
If allowed to proceed, she activates the nanotech. Her eyes glow red, as the nanotech interface in her brain vents waste heat through directed radiation. As Jali concentrates, the churning of the swarm slows. Shapes begin to emerge in the chaos; forms coalesce out of the utility fog. Are they buildings? Computer systems? People? It is hard to tell, but there is definitely something there.

THE FINAL DECISION

At this point, Lemuel reveals himself. He flips open a hidden hatch and pulls out an FGMP-16, which he hefts effortlessly with one hand. He levels it at Jali, and asks the Travellers to stand aside.

Lemuel explains that he has studied Jali's work over the course of this chase. She has done very, very well. He estimates that there is a 40% chance that her solution might solve the problem of the nanotech swarms and restore order to Neumann – but might also allow the mad machines to reassert themselves, while there is a 60% chance that it will lead to a swarm outbreak. Lemuel reveals the secret history of Neumann; how the AIs discovered a device that he believes to be an Ancient booby-trap, how they struggled, and how the eleven AIs still exist within the nanotech churn. Jali's work may live on. He will whisper it to some other brilliant scientist, who will carry the work a step further. One day, aeons in the future, Neumann will be safe once again – but not today.

What do the Travellers do?



- **Nothing:** The safest option. Lemuel incinerates Jali. Without her influence, the nanotech swarms falls back to its regular chaotic state. Lemuel tells the Travellers to tell Hodal that Jali died of her nanotech infection. He offers them a MCr1 bonus to keep quiet. If they quibble, he points out that he is the immortal god-king of this planet and has a whole church of psychopathic crusaders armed with fusion guns. Do they really want to get on his bad side?
- **Fight Back:** The Travellers cannot kill Lemuel – or, to be more accurate, they cannot kill the Immortal Protector. If they destroy his Lemuel avatar, then he can grow another clone body. Still, killing Lemuel gives Jali time to put her solution into action.
- **Plead with Lemuel**: Excellent roleplaying and equally excellent Persuade checks can convince Lemuel to gamble on Jali's solution. Even immortal AIs get tired and willing to risk it all on one throw of the dice.

JALI'S SOLUTION

If Jali is allowed go ahead with her solution, throw 2D.

On 7-, it does not work. The swarm breaks free of her attempted control. It pours over her, and Jali dissolves as the grey goo tears her apart and makes more of itself from the elements of her body. The Travellers have to flee immediately, or they too will be devoured. Soon, Flame Knights of the Shield Church arrive, using their fusion guns in a desperate attempt to hold back the tide. In years to come, this will be remembered as the worst outbreak in centuries; millions perish as the grey goo swamps previously safe sections of the planet.

On 8+, it works. The nanotech swarm slows, then begins to act with purpose. Slowly, it begins to restore the structures it pulled apart. Building that were devoured centuries ago reform, like seashells left behind by a retreating tide. In other places, the Travellers see the swarms build up human corpses, layer by layer, shaping bones, then laying muscle and fat and nerve tissue down, creating perfect corpses of people who died 1500 years ago. It will take a long time for the chaos to fully subside, but within a generation, Neumann will be restored to something approaching its former glory.

And in the middle of the swarm wastes, the eleven AIs reactivate and continue to assemble their transcendence engine, an enigmatic device built according to million-year-old designs left by a more advanced species. It will take them years to complete the engine, but if they finish it, it may open the gateway to a new phase of existence for those brave enough to pass through it – or it may destroy Neumann. Either way, it's beyond the Travellers' field of expertise.

THE JOURNEY HOME

Crossing back through the Imperium should be uneventful if the Travellers keep a low profile.

Optionally, they may run into Professor haut-Belzoni on the way back to Drinax (see *The Treasure of Sindal*) or hear of Captain Hammer's crusade (see *The Game of Sun and Shadow*).

Once they return to Tech-World, the Travellers can inform Hodal of Jali's fate; as long as the Shield Church remained ignorant of Tech-World's involvement in Jali's experiments, Hodal will remain well disposed towards them.

The Trojan Reach, they say, is the graveyard of empires. Those foolhardy enough to try resurrecting the glories of the past rarely succeed.

CHAPTER-EIGHT

THE TREASURE OF SINDAL

"Perhaps the greatest Admiral of the Star Guard was also, ironically, the one who presided over its final defeat. Peras was the equal of any of her predecessors in strategic thinking..."

- The Fall of Salif: A Re-Evaluation by haut-Belzoni

This adventure takes place in the Tliowaha and Sindal subsectors of the Spinward Marches, and begins on Drinax.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

An archaeologist visits Drinax to consult the archives of the Floating Palace. Professor haut-Belzoni believes he has discovered the key to the fabled Treasure of Sindal, a hoard of unimaginable wealth lost in the fall of the old Star Empire. Unfortunately, a band of pirates learn of the professor's discovery and attempt to kidnap him.

With or without the professor, the chase is on. The professor's research indicates that finding the treasure hoard's location requires visiting four worlds in Sindal subsector – Noricum, Number One, Thebus and finally Ace – before its final location can be unlocked. With three other pirate bands also hunting the treasure, the Travellers must play their enemies off against each other to find the treasure's last resting place.

Background

The glorious Empire of Sindal endured for a thousand years, and ruled over much of the Trojan Reach. The old Emperors of Sindal were proud and generous; their descendants were proud and cruel, and kept order through orbital bombardment and biological weapons. Subject worlds that refused to pay ruinous taxes were blasted into oblivion from high orbit. In time, the Sindalian provinces rose up en masse, supported by rebels within the Star Guard, and the empire tore itself apart in civil war. Old Noricum, the former seat of the Emperor, was destroyed. Parts of the empire survived – worlds like Albe or Drinax had the strength and technology to hold onto some territory – but for the rest of the sector, the fall of Sindal brought an end to interstellar rule of law.

It was a cruel irony that perhaps the finest and bravest officer to ever wear the crest of the Star Guard came into her own in that last war. Admiral Gani Peras was a brilliant naval officer, beloved by her crew and feared by her enemies. Both loyalists and rebels courted Peras; her sense of duty demanded that she stay loyal to her oath to the Emperor, but her sense of honour forced her to acknowledge the wholly justified grievances of the provinces. She led the defence of the spinward fleets, slowing the advance of the rebels and ensuring the war impacted on the civilian population as little as possible. She avoided direct engagements where possible, preferring to use her light *Harrier*- and *Wyvern*-class ships to attack enemy supply lines and fuel dumps. Whenever a rebel commander used ortillery on civilian targets, though, Peras showed no mercy. The rings of debris that still orbit Homestead and Vume are testament to the wrath of Gani Peras.

Not even a commander of her calibre could stop the civil war. Around the year -1400, her squadron of five surviving ships jumped into the Noricum system, the besieged seat of the emperor. What happened next is a matter of conjecture, but most historians agree that Peras somehow convinced the emperor to hand over the contents of the Imperial Treasury. Some believe Peras hid the treasury somewhere on Noricum; others claim she intended to use the treasury as a bribe to convince the advancing rebels to negotiate. Others believe the Last Loyal Admiral betrayed her oath at the last, and stole the treasury for herself.

Peras returned to her squadron and they jumped out – out of the system, and out of the history books. There were never any confirmed sightings of the squadron again. Peras became another legend of the Reach, gone for two thousand years.

What Really Happened?

What happened to the treasury of Sindal? Who knows! It is probably still buried on Noricum, in one of the planet's death zones, or maybe it was looted by raiders in the sack of the planet all those centuries ago. It does not matter – the treasure was just money, just platinum and iridium and lanthanum and precious metals, shiny things of little importance.

No, what Gani Peras took from Sindal was something much more dangerous. Consider this – for hundreds of years, the Empire of Sindal enforced its will on the outer colonies through orbital bombardment and biological weapons. The mark of the Empire, stamped on a dozen worlds, was a smouldering, radioactive crater. The real treasure of Sindal was the Emperor's personal arsenal of planet-killing weapons. Peras convinced the Emperor that she could set up a doomsday station – if the rebels dared attack Noricum itself, she would use the weapons to obliterate rebel worlds. The Emperor agreed, but Peras had no intention of actually putting her plan into action. She hid the weapons on a secret naval base, where they have remained to this day.

The imperial archaeologist, haut-Belzoni, has discovered the key to this doomsday station.

THE ARCHAEOLOGIST

Yutal Mirobar haut-Belzoni, FIAS, FIHS, PhD and a dozen other acronyms, hails from the distant world of Regina, far away in the Spinward Marches. He is a professor of archaeology in the famous university there, specialising in historical naval technology. His landmark thesis on Vilani logistics during the Fifth Interstellar War is required reading for those suffering from chronic insomnia.

Twenty years ago, haut-Belzoni obtained a curiosity – a message globe, devices are common across Charted Space. Each globe contains a secure message that can only be opened with the proper authorisation (or enough hacking skillz). Open the globe without the right key and its contents are instantly erased. This particular globe bore the emblem of the Empire of Sindal and came from the world of Albe (Sindal/0601), one of the most important worlds in the old Empire and now an Imperial protectorate. This globe was a message intended for the Duke of Albe, and required Ducal-level clearance to open. Even more astoundingly, the datestamp on the globe showed it was sent only a few days before the fall of Noricum. Presumably, similar message-globes were dispatched to the other key systems of Sindal (like Drinax) but never arrived, lost in the chaos of civil war.

PROF. YUTAL MIROBAR HAUT-BELZONI

FIAS,FIHS,PHD, ECT....

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	64

STR	5	INT	10	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	13	Admin 1, Advocate 2, Art (antiques) 1, Astrogation 0, Broker 0, Carouse 1, Diplomat 1, Drive 0, Electronics (computers) 2, Investigate 2, Science (history) 4, Steward 1, Vacc Suit 1
END	7	SOC	11	

EQUIPMENT	-

The professor is a cloistered academic who is out in the real world (or real worlds) for the first time. He is like an enthusiastic spider, all flailing hand gestures and uncoordinated, twitchy limbs. He launches into lectures on obscure topics at the slightest provocation, including a lengthy description of the old Empire of Sindal, the tale of Gani Peras, and the message globe he acquired. He has a letter of introduction from the Chancellor of the University of Regina to the Imperial Ambassador on Drinax, Thao Poluc.

Haut-Belzoni knew the tale of Gani Perot and the treasure of Sindal, and realised the message globe could be the key to that mystery. All he had to do was open it and the one world where the old Ducal-level clearance codes might still exist was Drinax. So, haut-Belzoni took a leave of absence from the university, and went off to seek his fortune.

Unfortunately, all the excitement was a little too much for the professor, and he talked to the wrong people…

Belzoni as a Passenger

If the Travellers take on passengers and trade goods when they are not buccaneering across the Reach, they may take haut-Belzoni some of the way towards Drinax. The professor pays High Passage rates where he can (not every free trader in the subsector can offer High Passage). He stays on board an Imperial liner bound for the Florian League as far as Tech-World, then switches to smaller ships.

If the Travellers are not the ones to bring the professor to Drinax, he arrives on board another trader, the Aslan vessel *Tai'ao* (see page 139).

1. AT DRINAX

Thao Poloc insists on King Oleb hosting a state dinner for this honoured guest, and Oleb's happy to do so – it is an excuse to go drinking. The Travellers are invited (of course, since almost everyone on Drinax can claim one title or another, almost everyone on Drinax is invited too).

During the dinner, haut-Belzoni describes how he found the message globe and how he needs the Ducal codes from the Floating Palace's archives to open it. Obviously, the treasure of Sindal belongs in a museum, although certain expenses may be paid both to haut-Belzoni and the King of Drinax. To be honest, haut-Belzoni laughs nervously, as he is planning on making far more money off the book deal – he intends to write a gripping work of real-life adventure about how he found the Treasure of Sindal.

King Obeb declares the globe will be opened tomorrow, after the dinner.

DINNER ENCOUNTERS

1. haut-Belzoni corners an unfortunate Traveller and talks to them for an eternity about Vilani logistics. The Traveller must make an Average (8+) Carouse check (END) to get drunk enough to withstand him; if the check fails, the Traveller insults him so terribly that he reduces the group's Imperial Standing by 1D.
2. Lady Hil, the most influential courtier in the Floating Palace, haughtily suggests that if the Travellers are to be part of the Drinaxian navy, then perhaps they should integrate into Drinaxian society. She will sponsor them – but only if they are willing to follow her advice. A Traveller who accepts Lady Hil as a sponsor may increase their Social Standing by +1 so long as she favours them, but may become embroiled in palace intrigue against her rivals.
3. Chieftain Galx of the Vespexers approaches a Traveller. Some of the young Vespexer warriors dream of going into space. Can the Travellers find places for them about their ship? The Vespexers have only minimal skills but are eager to learn.
4. An influential merchant from Torpol complains loudly about the increase in piracy. He glares at the Travellers, and his anger draws the attention of the Imperial Ambassador, Thao Poloc. Unless the Travellers defuse the situation, then Poloc becomes suspicious of them, reducing their Imperial Standing by 1D.
5. King Oleb gets drunk and demands that the Traveller with the highest STR engage in a spirited round of hurricane boxing with him. Hurricane boxing, the king explains, is a new sport he just invented. First, you get a giant floating palace suspended on massive antigravity engines. He's got one of those. Second, you fly into a hurricane. Then, and this is the clever bit, you go out onto the forward topdeck and you have a boxing match. First one to fall off loses. It would be immensely impolite to refuse a royal command, but even more impolite to punch the king to death.
6. The Travellers spot Faihlokh (see page 139) speaking to Dai Kinear (see page 140). Dai then approaches one of the Travellers and flirts with them. While she is genuinely attracted to whichever Traveller she picks, she does have an ulterior motive – she knows a rare telepathic technique that makes it easier for her to read the mind of anyone she has had close physical contact with. The technique gives her DM+2 to any Telepathy checks targeting such an individual.

OPENING THE MESSAGE GLOBE

The next morning, a few select dignitaries – King Oleb, Princess Rao, Scholar Voha, Thao Polo, haut-Belzoni, and the Travellers – are invited into a sealed chamber in the Scholar's Tower. The chamber incorporates TL15 anti-bugging technology, and Scholar Voha assures them there is no chance of anyone eavesdropping.

Scholar Voha produces another relic from the archives of Drinax – a second message globe. This one, he explains, was also sent by Gani Peras' fleet to the Ducal Seat at Drinax at the same time the message went to Albe. The globe was opened at some point in the intervening centuries but all it contained was a string of numbers and letters. Perhaps these numbers are a code, but not one any cryptographer in all those years managed to break. This second globe from Albe may contain the key to the code.

With great ceremony, Voha accesses the computer archives, and King Oleb gives his authorisation. Computer systems built during the days of the Sindalian Empire flicker into life as Oleb enters the codes passed down to him from the dukes of Drinax. The message sphere pops open, and haut-Belzoni examines the contents.

CONTENTS OF IMPERIAL VAULT TRANSFERRED TO ADMIRAL PERAS' FLAGSHIP.
ADMIRAL PERAS ORDERED TO SET COURSE SPINWARD ALONG MAIN TO REFUGE.
IMPERIAL FAMILY AND RETAINERS WILL FOLLOW IF DEFENSIVE LINES AT SALIF FAIL.
KEY DISPATCHED TO THE DUKES OF ALBE, DRINAX, DPRES AND YGGDRASIL.
SIGNED BY HIS HAND, FELIX STAR DRAGON, EMPEROR OF SINDAL.

Stealing the Message Globe

Treacherous Travellers may think about stealing the globe; paranoid ones may worry about someone else taking the precious artefact. Point out that on its own, the globe is useless – without the Ducal codes, it is a 2,000-year old paperweight.

The Travellers may also wonder why King Oleb does not just take the globe and the treasure. The King is no fool – he does not believe there is any treasure left, so all this fuss is really just to curry favour with the Imperium. While Thao Poloc is busy grubbing around with archaeology, he will not notice Drinax's piratical ambitions; and if the treasure turns out to be real, why then, ships get attacked by pirates all the time. Oleb wants Drinax to appear innocent, and that means co-operating with haut-Belzoni.

Following that message is a page of closely printed letters and numbers, similar but not identical to the message sent to Drinax, followed by the word ACE.

Haut-Belzoni points out a string of co-ordinates printed at the bottom of the message, and explains they are a date, time, location and verification stamp. It is a genuine message, sent only a few weeks before the fall of Sindal. The location is on Noricum, the old Imperial throne world, but it was not at the Imperial palace. The location is not one he recognises – and he has made a study of Noricum. It must be a previously undiscovered secret base!

The Imperial family died on Noricum; they never followed Peras to the refuge, perhaps because the rebels broke through the lines at Salif (Sindal/0206) quicker than expected. That might also explain why no message-globes are known to have reached Dpres or Yggdrasil - the rebels swept in from the spinward side and may have intercepted the couriers, probably in the Thebus system. The battle of Magg's Moon was one of the last decisive encounters of the war. It might be worth looking for wreckage in that system, or questioning salvage crews and junk dealers on the markets to see if a sealed message globe was ever found.

Analysing the Codes

Diligent Travellers may wish to try breaking the code immediately, instead of gathering further information. Doing so is a Virtually Impossible (16+) Electronics (computers) check (1D hours, INT). Finding each subsequent code (from Noricum, Thebus and Number One) grants DM+2.

If successful, the Travellers learns the 'code' is not a code at all – it is the core dump of the targeting solution for a Sindalian-designed particle beam. This code precisely specifies the relative position of firer and target, as well as the frequency and particle mix for the beam. All the message globes contain slightly different targeting solutions but all are for the same type of particle beam weapon.

Why would Gali Peras send obscure technical data to the Dukes of the old Empire in such haste and secrecy?

The Scout Ship

If the Travellers do not accompany haut-Belzoni, then he travels in a battered old Type-S Scout called the *Confidence,* captained (and all other crew positions filled) by a battered old scout named Jacro Lekins. If the Travellers are not the ones to capture or destroy the *Confidence*, it gets destroyed by Petry Vallis' corsairs later.

THE QUEST

Haut-Belzoni declares his intention to travel to Noricum immediately to search for this treasure. If the Travellers wish, they can volunteer to accompany him; otherwise, Imperial Ambassador Thao Poloc arranges for an Imperial scout ship to be made available to the archaeologist. Either way, King Oleb speaks to the Travellers privately and suggests they secure the treasure for Drinax – without arousing Imperial suspicion. Either they convince haut-Belzoni that the treasure belongs to Drinax, or they steal it, or he meets with a nasty accident. However they arrange it is up to them, but they must travel to Noricum, investigate this supposed secret base, then retrace Admiral Peral's route to this mysterious 'refuge' where she brought the contents of the Imperial Vault. Off they go.

King Oleb gives the Travellers a copy of the Drinax Ducal codes on a data module. He warns that the module has a built-in self-destruct – it will automatically erase itself in 12 weeks or if tampered with. It is not that he does not trust them; it is just that they might die horribly in the vacuum of space, and he does not want his Ducal Seal falling into the wrong hands.

Missing Message Globes

If the Travellers fail to find the keys at Noricum, Thebus or Number One, then one of the other pirate groups recovers them instead. The Travellers then have to steal, capture or negotiate for the key codes at Ace (see page 136).

THE CHASE BEGINS

Three other pirate groups pursue the Treasure of Sindal. These groups are described fully, starting on page 139. How do these pirates find out about the treasure map?

Faihlokh's Raiders:

- Dai Kinnear is a telepath; she can read the minds of the Travellers or haut-Belzoni. She cannot read the code, but can learn that the Travellers are heading to Noricum.
- Alternatively, the raiders can plant a bomb on the Floating Palace. The explosion causes no lasting damage but in the confusion, Faihlokh grabs haut-Belzoni and steals the unlocked message globe.

Petyr Vallis:

- The infamous pirate captain preys on shipping along the Aslani border. The Travellers might encounter his ships in any of the Dustbelt worlds from Noricum onwards.
- If haut-Belzoni takes the scout ship Confidence instead of travelling with the Travellers, then Vallis' ship captures the scout at Noricum or Number One.
- Vallis may also contact the Travellers directly. If they are successful pirates and have expanded Drinax's reach and prestige, then Captain Vallis may suggest an alliance - he would give the Travellers access to his network of safe havens and fences if they offer him the same courtesy. If the Travellers accept, they may roll 1D+2 and move ports that many steps towards Haven status. For example, if they roll a 5, they could move five systems one step towards Haven, or one system five steps towards Haven, or any combination adding up to 5. Accepting an alliance with Vallis reduces the Travellers' Standing with the Aslan Hierate by 2D.
- Of course, while bargaining with the Travellers, Vallis asks what they are doing out in the Dustbelt...

The Proactive Recycling Company: Learn of the quest at Thebus (see page 141) but may pursue the Travellers after that encounter.

ENCOUNTERING THE PIRATES

The three pirate bands are the main opposition in this adventure. While each of them has a specific role in the adventure (at Noricum, Thebus and Number One), their involvement does not end there. The pirates may continue to pursue and harass the Travellers until defeated or forced to relent.

2. NORICUM

The Noricum system is lightly travelled. Even tourist ships avoid the former capital of the Empire – there may be monuments here, but they are deep in the Death Zones.

Optionally, the Travellers may encounter Petyr Vallis' ships in this system.

The co-ordinates from the Albe message globe lead the Travellers into a so-called Death Zone, a region of the planet made uninhabitable during the war. This particular region, up in the Black Mountains, got blasted by mutagenic weapons long ago, and there are still live viral cultures on the surface. Get infected by one of those, and you will die of some weird cancer if you are lucky (if you are unlucky, you will beat your comrades to death in a hormone-fuelled rage before dying).

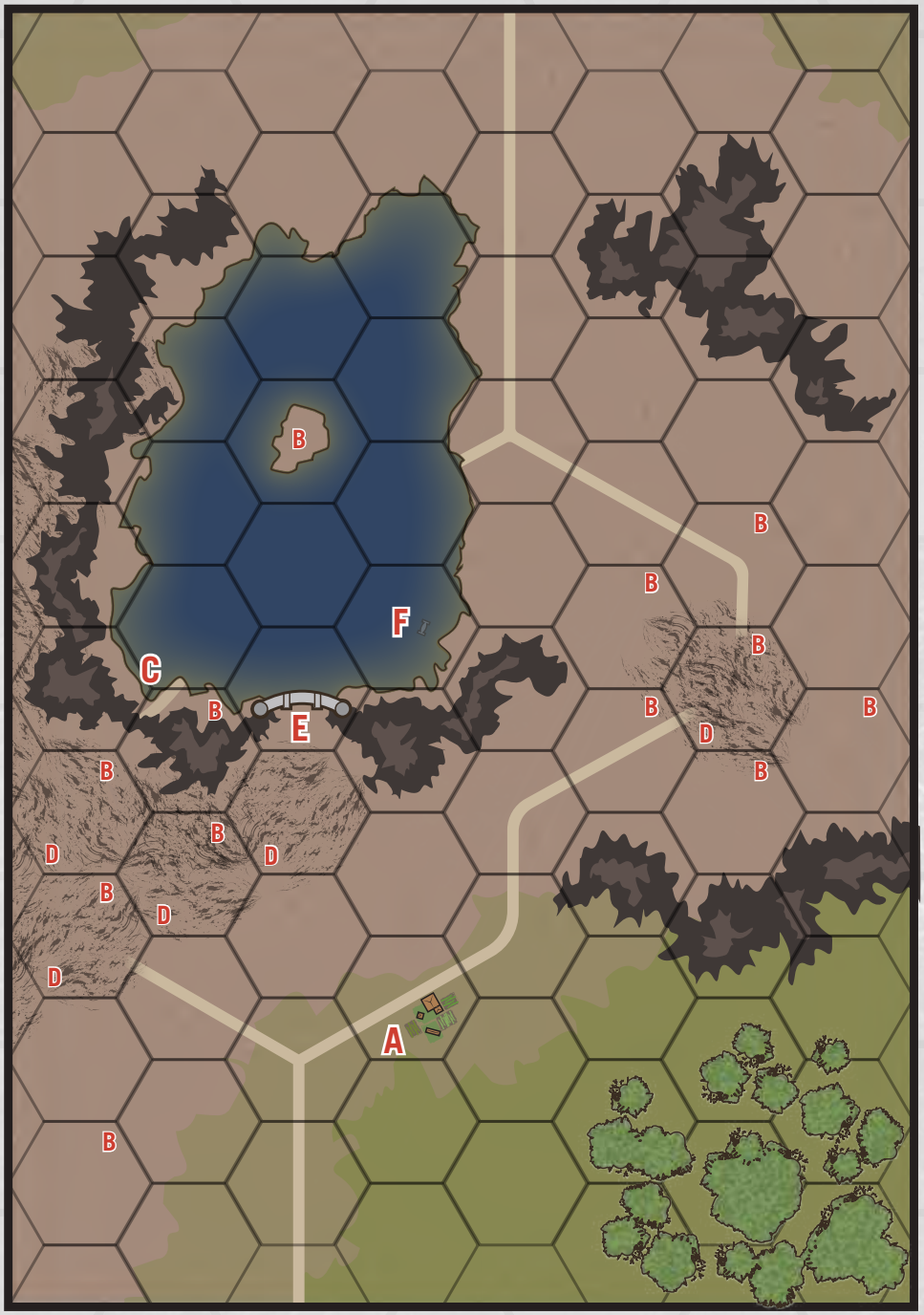
Imperial bases of this sort are sensor-shielded, so the only way to find it is to land and search on foot. The pirates need vacc suits of some kind to survive while searching.

Searching a surface hex is a Difficult (10+) Recon or Electronics (sensors) check (1D hours, INT). The Travellers must continue to search the surface until they find the entrance to the secret base. Travellers may establish task chains to speed their search (for example, Drive and DEX > Electronics (sensors) and INT > Recon and INT to drive a hovercraft across the surface while using its onboard sensors to search the area quickly).

Avoiding contamination is a Routine (6+) Vacc Suit check (END). One check must be made each day spent searching. If the roll fails, consult the Noricum Disasters table.

Noricum Disasters

Effect	Result
-1	Traveller is fatigued; DM-2 to all rolls until rested
-2	Slips down an incline, 1D damage
-3	Suit seals damaged; DM-4 to all future Vacc Suit checks until repaired
-4	Suit penetrated, 1Dx50 rad exposure
-5	Suit penetrated, END -1 permanently
-6 or more	Suit penetrated; END -2 permanently, Very Difficult (12+) Medic check (EDU) needed within 6 hours to avoid death



Map Key

A. Small Homestead: Questioning the locals with a Routine (6+) Persuade check (SOC) grants DM+1 to all checks made to find the secret base.

B. Hot Zone: Radiation levels here are higher than normal; 1Dx100 rad exposure.

C. Old Road: Once the Travellers find this ruin, they can follow it, granting DM+1 to all checks to find the base.

D. Broken Ground: Inflicts DM-2 to Vacc Suit checks.

E. Dam: This former hydroelectric dam barely holds back the water; the lake behind it is clearly much larger than the engineers intended.

F. Secret Base Entrance: Underwater; the Travellers must blow up the dam or release some of the water to access the entrance. The base beneath is partially waterlogged.

The entrance to the base is a huge hatch of bonded superdense armour, marked with the Star Dragon crest of the old empire of Sindal. Could the treasury lie beyond?

INSIDE THE BASE

Exploring the base, the Travellers quickly realise the following:

- This was a military depot or arsenal, not a base. There are lots of silos and vaults, and relatively few barracks or work areas. It was clearly designed to store something valuable.
- They are not the first people to visit. The base was looted long, long ago. Probably multiple times, in fact. Almost everything of value is gone; they are wading through waist-deep toxic water for nothing.

Searching the base reveals a secret door leading into an undisturbed section. This vault is also empty of any treasure but they do find something curious; standing on a pedestal is a naval particle cannon, identical to the one on the *Harrier*. It is about three metres long, so getting it out will not be easy, but it is apparently intact.

Burnt into the ferrocrete wall opposite the cannon are two cryptic messages. First, there is a long string of digits, similar to the ones found in the message globe; it is another particle beam firing solution. Second, there is a set of jump co-ordinates, depicted in the old-fashioned way used by the Star Guard of Sindal. Vectors and co-ordinates in jump space do not map to normal space in an easily comprehensible way but the Star Guard used a notation of interlocking hyperspheres to show relative positions. An Average (8+) Astrogation check (EDU) translates the diagram into something more conventional – it is a jump solution for the Ace system (0109/Sindal).

THE PIRATES

Meanwhile, Faihlokh and his raiders waited for the Travellers to find the base. Now the entrance is uncovered, the Aslan and his pirates swoop in to capture whatever the Travellers find. Faihlokh's tactics are simple - if the Travellers left any crew on their ship, he has one of his ships attack them to draw them away, while his second ship lands outside the base and he leads a squad in to storm the place and capture the treasure.

Assuming Faihlokh wins, of course, the treasure is a bit disappointing - one particle cannon does not a fabled treasure hoard make. It is like opening Tutankhamun's tomb and finding a rusty dagger. Infuriated, Faihlokh initially feels like taking his anger out on the Travellers, but Dai Kinnear convinces him to just seal them in the base and leave. After all, there were another two message globes that never reached Dpres or Yggdrasil - maybe they show where the treasure was taken by Gani Peras.

If the Travellers defeat Faihlokh and the Aslan is not able to escape with his life, then Dai Kinnear surrenders and offers to switch sides. She wants to be on the winning team and believes the Travellers could use an adept telepath.

ESCAPING THE BASE

It is easier to find an exit from the base than an entrance. A few hours' searching finds a flooded tunnel that leads outside. The Travellers have to swim underwater (or walk underwater, if they still have vacc suits), requiring an Athletics (endurance) or Vacc Suit check to escape.

Moving On

The next part of this adventure takes place in the Thebus system, where the courier ships carrying the message globes to the other two duchies were attacked by rebels more than two thousand years past. Several clues point in this direction.

- Any Traveller who consults library data or possesses Science (history) 2 or more knows that after the fall of Salif, the rebel forces attacked Thebus and Noricum. Based on the timing of the messages being dispatched from Noricum, the couriers would have been in the Thebus system around then.
- Professor haut-Belzoni can suggest checking out the Thebus system.
- Any Traveller with Streetwise 2 or higher, or who has made a study of pirate gangs of the Trojan Reach, has heard tales of the Proactive Recycling Corporation, a group of scavengers and thieves who operate out of the obscure Thebus system. They know the wreckage fields better than anyone.
- Dai Kinnear knows about the Proactive Recycling Corporation and can also suggest checking out Thebus.

3. THEBUS

The void preserves.

A ship that died two thousand – or ten thousand – years ago is almost indistinguishable from a ship that perished only a few days past. Oh, there are differences, of course. Hydrogen leaks out of fuel tanks; radioactives decay; micrometeorite craters pock-mark the hull. If a ship's orbit brings it close to the system's primary, then the expansion and contraction of metal can, over centuries, damage and crack the hull. For the most part, though, the ship is preserved by the void.

The crew, too, may be eerily intact despite the passing centuries. Radiation and cold kill bacteria that would otherwise devour the corpses, at least on the surface. The decay happens *within*. The corpse of a long-dead space voyager looks like an ice-encrusted mummy, as the moisture in the surface layers of skin gets leeched out as ice. Touch the corpse, though, and it falls apart; it rotted from within centuries ago, despite the preservation of the surface.

Long, long ago, in the Thebus system, two mighty fleets clashed. Both wore the emblem of the Star Dragon of Sindal, the same emblem that hangs behind King Oleb's throne in Drinax. The remains of those two fleets – united once again in destruction – orbits the Thebusian star 700,000,000 kilometres out, a floating graveyard for perfectly-preserved corpses.

Thebus lies on the Dustbelt Main, one of the most-trafficked belts of stars in the Sector. Even a low-tech jump-1 raider from Tyr or Acis can make it out here to wrench chunks of refined metal and high-tech salvage from the wrecks. The fleets were skeletonised centuries ago and there are still a few hulks floating out in the void. Tourist liners heading for the Florian League sometimes fly by the largest intact wrecks, so bored Imperial nobles can admire the ruins.

Smaller wrecks escaped scavengers until recently. A giant 50,000-ton warship made a much more tempting target for a scavenger than the remains of a 100-ton courier…

… unless that courier holds the key to a fortune.

THE DISTRESS CALL

As soon as the Travellers jump into the system, they detect a distress call emanating from close to the third planet in the system, a gas giant named Olo according to the old charts.

+++Signal GK, Signal GK. Um, is there anyone out there? This is the yacht Lyonesse II*. We seem to be a little off course. Signal GK, need assistance+++*

Signal GK was the Vilani equivalent of SOS; it is rarely used these days, and most commonly encountered near the core systems of the Imperium. This ship must be very far from home.

The yacht is nearly 10,000,000 kilometres away from the Travellers' vessel; flight time at 3G acceleration is around 10 hours. En route, the Travellers can interrogate the crew of the *Lyonesse II*. They learn:

- The ship is owned and operated by a noble, Baron Caruda, who comes from an obscure world in Deneb (Modika, if they ask). He was en route to the Florian League on board a liner, but thought he would stop off at Thebus to go hunting.
- He tried scooping fuel from the atmosphere of the gas giant, but damaged his ship in the attempt. He is not a technical person, so is not quite sure what is wrong. Lots of the little lights on the control thingy have turned red. Is that bad? The chap who sold him the ship assured him it was really easy to fly.
- Caruda tells the Travellers whatever they want to hear to lure them closer. If they ask for a reward, why, he happens to have several thousand credits on board to pay for emergencies. If they ask about a 2,000-year-old Sindalian courier, why, he happened to spot just such a ship when he was trying to scoop fuel.

As the Travellers may quickly realise, Caruda's lying to them. He is not a noble, and he is not in distress. He belongs to the Proactive Recycling Company (see page 141). The recent increase in pirate activity cut into the PRC's profits, so they set up the *Lyonesse II* as a make-shift Q-Ship – bait for any pirates who jumped into the Thebus system.

The *Confidence* & Haut-Belzoni

If the unfortunate archaeologist is still operating independently, then he insists on going to the aid of the stricken *Lyonesse II* and runs straight into the ambush.

THE AMBUSH

The PRC's plan is as follows:

- The yacht lures any prospective pirates in close to the gas giant.
- If they dock with the yacht, then the four pirates wearing boarding vacc suits waiting in the airlock storm the docking ship and try to take it intact.
- Meanwhile, three other pirate ships – two Star Ray-class Interceptors and a Vulture-class Salvage Hauler (see page 141) emerge from behind a nearby moonlet and spring the trap.
- President Yang is on board the first Interceptor, the *Invigilator*. Her sister ship, *Death's Actuary*, is under orders to protect Yang's ship at all costs.
- If the battle goes badly, then the yacht can be sacrificed – its jump drive is shot and irreparable, so it can be used as a fireship. There is a rack of nuclear missiles in the cargo bay that can be detonated, inflicting 6D damage on any ship within Close range.

NEGOTIATING WITH THE PRC

The PRC are not bloodthirsty. They just do not want competition in their star-turf. If the Travellers are willing to negotiate or offer a deal, then the PRC are willing to listen.

Convincing the PRC to deal is a Very Difficult (12+) Diplomacy check (INT) with the following DMs:

+1	if the Travellers did not attempt to pirate the yacht
-2	if the Travellers attacked the yacht, and surrendered when the trap was sprung
+4	if the Travellers attacked the yacht and forced the PRC to retreat
+1	if the Travellers offer to share the Treasure of Sindal with the PRC once they find it.
+1	if the Travellers agree not to attack ships within 6 parsecs of Thebus.
+1	if the Travellers are Tolerated by the Imperium (Imperium Standing of 6+)
+2	if the Travellers are Allied with the Imperium (Imperium Standing of 20+)
-1	if the Travellers are an Irritant to the Imperium (Imperium Standing of -6)
-2	if the Travellers are Infamous in the Imperium (Imperium Standing of -21)
-4	if the Travellers are an Enemy of the Imperium (Imperium Standing of -40)

THE JUNKYARD

Also in orbit of Olo is the PRC base, a junkyard of spare parts and wrecks ostensibly salvaged from the thousand-year-old remains of the battle. Anyone who scans the junkyard closely might detect some suspiciously recent components among the old parts (of course, anyone who tries that will quickly end up as spare parts themselves).

If the Travellers negotiate with the PRC – or escape the ambush and force a surrender – they can visit the junkyard and search the wreckage for the remains of a Sindalian courier. President Yang admits they found just such a ship a few years ago, but never bothered hauling her back to the junkyard. She was just too badly damaged to be worth reclaiming. Why do the infamous Pirates of Drinax care about a two-thousand-year-old casualty of the Battle of Thebus?

THE COURIER

The wreck of the courier floats far beyond Olo, on the fringes of the system some 900,000,000 kilometres further out. Flight time is likely to be several days. When they locate the wrecked ship, the Travellers can search the debris field with an Electronics (sensors) check (EDU), or board the wreckage and search it by hand to locate the message globe. The globe is still miraculously intact, clutched in the gloved hand of a pilot who has been dead for two thousand years.

Opening the globe using the codes given by King Oleb reveals – another string of numbers. Again, these are the configuration codes for a Sindalian particle beam weapon, followed by the word ACE.

The courier's computer systems were fried in the battle, but the black box recorder is intact and can be recovered. The black box contains a record of the last few minutes of the ship's life. The courier jumped from Noricum to this system, hoping to rendezvous with an escort flotilla. However, the rebel fleet had already broken through the lines at Salif, and the courier's sensor screen filled with enemy IFF signatures. A lucky shot breached the fuel tanks, preventing her from jumping ever again. She turned and tried to run, but ended up on a vector leading out of the system. She has been floating in that same direction for two thousand years, which brought her to this lonely grave out here in the void.

Importantly, there is a clue in the black box recorder. The other courier ship – the one carrying the globe bound for Yggdrasil – radioed a coded message, announcing that it was going to try a jump to the neighboring system of Number One.

She must still be there.

4. NUMBER ONE

If the Travellers have not already encountered Petyr Vallis, then his ships are in this system.

Finding one wrecked ship after two thousand years was a miracle. Finding two beggars belief. The Travellers cannot just scan the system in the hopes of finding the wreckage of the courier. Fortunately, they can narrow the search considerably if they think about the state of affairs all those centuries ago. Haut-Belzoni can provide useful historical perspective, as can a consultation of library data on the system.

While Number One's population numbers in the millions now, back then it was just a small prison colony with only a few thousand inmates; the underwater dungeon of the Emperors of Sindal. There was only a single settlement on the planet, the old prison itself. If a courier ship jumped into the system, damaged and carrying a precious cargo, there is only one place it might have gone to find shelter – the prison dome, deep beneath the ocean waves.

DRAGONSDOME

Dragonsdome is the oldest settlement on Number One; it grew up around the prison. Today, it is a trading post and mining colony with a population of half a million, ruled by a Warden. Dragonsdome controls the planet's starport, which stands atop a mountain that rises steeply out of the ocean five kilometres north of the dome. If the Travellers land at the starport, they can take a submersible funicular that runs down into Dragonsdome.

Once in Dragonsdome, the Travellers must visit the court to gain access to the dome's records but they are not the only offworlders at the Warden's Court – Petyr Vallis' agent Hokmar is here too, and he spies on the Travellers' actions. For example, if the Travellers locate the wreck of the courier or say something that might damage their reputation with the pirates of the Trojan Reach during their audience with the Warden, Hokmar reports this information back to Vallis.

AN AUDIENCE WITH WARDEN RANNIB

The Wardenship became a hereditary position hundreds of generations ago. Warden Rannib (Keeper of the Keys, Governor-General by Appointment of the Star Dragon, Grand High Chokey, Administrator of the Starport and Lord-Regent of the World of Number One) is an eight-year-old girl. While her advisors and viziers make most of the decisions, Rannib is enchanted by tales of pirates, so she wishes to meet with the Travellers herself.

To be precise, Rannib is enchanted by tales of pirates getting their just desserts. Number One has suffered attacks from raiders from Oghma, Acis and Tyr within living memory, and hatred of pirates runs strong among the population. Stories about pirates getting flung in the dungeons or keel-hauled in vacuum are bedtime reading for the young Warden.

In order to convince Rannib to let them consult the prison archives, the Travellers need to impress Rannib by telling tales of their heroic battles with pirates with the Art (performer) skill, persuading her they need her help to stop pirates with Persuade, or befuddling her with a barrage of legal jargon through Advocate are all possible options. Alternatively, the Travellers can bribe a vizier with Cr7000 (+/- Effect of a Streetwise check x Cr1000).

THE DOME ARCHIVES

The archives of Number One date back more than two thousand years. Fortunately, they are in excellent condition, due to a social movement that held sway three hundred years ago, in which Dragonsdome claimed pre-eminence over the other domes by emphasising its ancient culture and status as first settlement. Many Sindalian-era computer files and documents were transferred to imperishable everglass to preserve them for eternity.

A successful Investigate or Admin (INT) check digs up the relevant record. According to the files, a damaged courier ship landed on Number One a week after the Battle of Thebus. The pilot was accused of breaching a secure area and incarcerated together with 'all his belongings' in a part of the prison called Dragon's Deep. Reading between the lines, the Warden of the prison back then was clearly unsure which way the winds of history were blowing, so he chose to hide the courier in the deepest part of the ocean. If the Sindalian Emperor had triumphed, then the Warden could have sped the courier on his way after sorting out the bureaucratic misunderstanding. Of course, as it transpired, the rebels won, so the Warden concealed evidence of any Imperial presence on his world and declared his support for the rebel cause.

Dragon's Deep is an underwater chasm five hundred kilometres north-west of Dragonsdome. Back when this place was a working prison, cruel wardens used Dragon's Deep as the ultimate in solitary confinement. Prisoners would be placed into pressure-resistant bathyspheres and plunged into the darkest depths of the ocean, to hang from thin cables until they had atoned for their misdeeds – or until the Warden ordered they be killed. Those unfortunates would hear the cables detaching from their spheres, then feel the sickening fall as they plunged even deeper into the stygian waters, until finally the pressure crushed them into oblivion.

EXPLORING DRAGON'S DEEP

The Deep is much too, well, deep for conventional submersibles. The Travellers must hire a specially designed deep-sea submersible. Most of these vehicles are used for prospecting on the sea bed, but with a successful Streetwise check, the Travellers find one vessel, the *Barnacle*, that they can hire for a mere Cr5000, complete with her captain, Balamira Greenfell.

Exploring Dragon's Deep: *Barnacle* cruises across the abyssal plane, hugging the sea floor. Her thrusters churn up the silt, disturbing the titanic gigaprawns that are the apex predator on Number One. After eight hours, the submarine arrives at the Deep and drops down,

BALAMIRA GREENFELL

CAPTAIN OF *THE BARNACLE*

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	46

STR	8	INT	6	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	5	Admin 1, Broker 2, Carouse 1,
END	8	SOC	3	Electronics (remote ops) 2, Engineer (power) 1, Gambler 2, Mechanic 2, Navigate 1, Seafarer (submersible) 3, Vacc Suit 2
EQUIPMENT	-			

Playing Greenfell: Cackle. Roll the submarine upside down. Scream 'we're all going to die' whenever the Travellers look too comfortable. Find morbid humour hilarious.

Greenfell is a lifelong resident of Number One; she has never even been to the surface. The thought of being out in the *open*, with nothing between you and the vacuum of space but a little *gas* is terrifying. She only feels safe when she has at least a few thousand tons of water over her head. She has been a prospector and explorer for years, and lives aboard her little *Barnacle*. The submersible is definitely lived-in, with washing strung between control consoles and breakfast being cooked on the reactor casing. It is rather like plunging into the hostile depths of the pitiless ocean in someone's one-bed apartment.

her hull creaking under the strain of the mounting external pressure. Even stranger creatures swim past the viewports – colonies of spherical crystal-jellies, bioluminescent custard eels, bug-eyed axecrabs with their vicious bludgeoning limbs. In time, the descending *Barnacle* leaves the riot of undersea life behind.

Outside, the Travellers glimpse the occasional bit of wreckage, likely the remains of old bathyscapes. Greenfell happily tells the Travellers they still sometimes put people to death by pressure-crushing on this planet; it is, for example, the mandated sentence for convicted space pirates.

Locating the Courier: The *Barnacle* cannot endure the pressures of the Deep indefinitely. To find the courier, one Travellers must make a successful Difficult (10+) Electronics (sensors) check (1D hours, INTR). Failing inflicts an amount of damage on the *Barnacle* equal to the number of hours spent searching. This damage is only temporary, as it represents the added stress and strain of resisting the added weight of water – if the *Barnacle* returns to a safe depth, then the damage can be repaired with a Mechanics check. However, if the ship suffers actual damage while under pressure, the temporary damage becomes normal damage.

The Courier

The Sindalian courier-ship is still intact. She is encased in a shell of everglass to protect her from the ocean and pressure, but over two millennia, flaws in the shell let some water in, and the ship will never fly or function again. Still, the message globe may still be inside.

The Travellers have three options. Firstly, the *Barnacle* can dock with the courier and use its manipulator arm to cut away the everglass over the ventral airlock. The Travellers could then cross onto the courier and recover the message globe. The danger is that the loss of the everglass shell will cause the ship to crumple under the pressure.

The second option is to send a remote-controlled prospecting drone instead of a Travellers. The problem with this plan is the drone only works underwater, so the Travellers would have to flood the ship, possibly hastening its destruction.

The third option is to raise the ship to the surface of the ocean, and recover the globe using conventional means.

THE *BARNACLE* DEEP SEA SUBMERSIBLE

TL	7
SKILL	SEAFARER (SUBMARINE)
AGILITY	-2
SPEED (CRUISE)	VERY SLOW (IDLE)
RANGE (CRUISE)	50 (75)
CREW	1
PASSENGERS	6
CARGO	0.5 TON
HULL	36
SHIPPING	6 TON
COST	MCR3

ARMOUR

FRONT	10
REAR	10
SIDES	10

TRAITS

None

Autopilot (skill level)	-
Communications (range)	500 km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+1
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+1
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Autopilot (improved), Bunk, Communications System (basic), Entertainment System, Fire Extinguishers, Fresher, Manipulator Arm (basic), Navigation System (basic), Sensor System (improved, underwater)

No weapon

DESCRIPTION

Generally used purely for research purposes (and often carried in the internal bay of a research ship (see *Vehicle Handbook* page 108), the deep sea submersible is small, cramped, but provides a (relatively) safe method of reaching the crushing depths of the deepest oceans.

Safe Depth: 1000m
Crush Depth: 3000m
Life Support: 100 days

Breaching the Courier: The courier can survive 2D minutes before being destroyed by the pressure. Flooding the ship to use a drone costs 1D of those minutes. Finding the message globe requires a Recon check (DEX), but the Travellers' maximum DM from his DEX and Recon skill cannot exceed his Vacc Suit or Electronics (remote ops) skill, depending on whether he is searching manually or using the drone.

Any Travellers on the courier when it collapses are almost certainly killed (6D damage per round).

If the courier is destroyed before the Travellers recover the message globe, they still have a chance to save it. A successful Electronics (sensors) check (INT) spots it tumbling into the depths along with the rest of the wreckage. The *Barnacle* can dive deeper, allowing a Traveller to try grabbing the globe with the submersible's manipulator arm. Grabbing the globe requires a successful Electronics (remote ops) check (DEX); each attempt costs the *Barnacle* a point of temporary damage. Should the Travellers lose the globe into the darkness of the ocean, then the Treasure of Sindal is forever lost.

DEPTH CHARGES

As the Travellers return to the surface (possibly while towing the wreck of the courier), Greenfell detects objects tumbling down towards them – depth charges! Each charge inflicts 4D damage if it explodes near the submersible; while Captain Greenfell is at the helm with her Seafarer skill, the Travellers could set up task chains to help her dodge incoming depth charges.

After a few near misses, the Travellers receive a narrowcast sonic message from another submersible. Who is attacking the Travellers? Pick the most appropriate:

- **Petyr Vallis**: The pirate learned of the Travellers' scheme through a combination of rumours in the pirate underworld and a report from his agent Hokmar. Now he wants the message globe, or at least a share of the treasure.
- **Faihlokh**: The pirate followed the Travellers from Noricum, and now wants the message globe.
- **Warden Rannib's Guards**: The dome authorities realised the Travellers are notorious pirates, and now intend to send them to the bottom of the ocean.

The Travellers can either cut a deal with their attackers, or try to escape. Escaping requires a series of opposed tests between the attacker's Electronics (sensors) and the submersible pilot's Seafarer (submersible) skills. The submersible needs to accumulate an Effect total of 4+ over multiple checks to escape.

OPENING THE GLOBE

The message globe was originally bound for the world of Yggdrasil, which was once another regional capital of the Sindalian empire. Again, the globe contains only a string of code that the characters recognise as configuration and targeting data for a Sindalian particle beam, and the word ACE at the end.

5. ACE

Ace stands for Argon-CO^2 Environment, a reference to the unbreathable atmosphere of the planet. As on Number One, the population live in domes and tunnels. Unlike Number One, however, the people of Ace are extremely vulnerable to attack from orbit – one missile can breach a dome and expose the interior to the toxic atmosphere.

Electrical discharges in the upper atmosphere of Ace create fantastic light displays. A religious group called the Sages of Ace divine the future in these lightning-blue aurorae.

DEAD ENDS

The Travellers may try scanning the system for a courier wreck, or consulting the authorities on Ace, such as they are. Scans detect nothing. No surviving institution on Ace dates back to the Sindalian empire, although the oldest domes and tunnels were constructed then. Checking records and archives fails to find any trace of a visit by a courier.

THE RIVALS

Any surviving pirate groups – Faihlokh's gang, the Proactive Recycling Company, Petyr Vallis' group, or any other pirates who have become involved in this treasure hunt – arrive in the Ace system soon after the Travellers jump in.

If rivals captured one or more of the message globes, then the Travellers need to either work out a way to acquire the data in those globes or else come to a deal to share the treasure. If the Travellers have all the globes themselves, then they need to work out the solution to the treasure map before their rivals arrive and try to take the secrets by force.

THE SECRET

Each of the four message globes contained targeting data and firing solutions for a particle beam.

The atmosphere of Ace reacts to an electrical discharge with brilliant light displays.

A particle beam works like an electrical discharge.

So, take four ships, all armed with particle beams. Program them with data from the message globes. Press the firing control. The beams follow the instructions left by Gani Peras some two thousand years ago, sweeping through the atmosphere of the planet below.

The sky lights up with brilliant bursts of light. As the beams move and modulate, the patterns become more complicated, interacting and interfering with each other until the nature of the map becomes clear.

The combination of four particle beams in the atmosphere of Ace projects a map five hundred miles wide across the sky. The map is a starchart. A location two parsecs coreward of Ace is highlighted. There is nothing there according to official charts, so the Travellers would be jumping blind into deep space.

But faint hearts never won the Treasure of Sindal.

MAKING THE JUMP

Jumping to the listed co-ordinates requires an Astrogation check taking 1D x 10 minutes, as described on page 148 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. If other pirates are present and not allied with the Travellers, throw 2D for each of them. On a 6-, they do not attempt the jump. On a 7-9, they attempt to jump and take 1D x 10 minutes to complete the astrogation calculations. On a 10+, they try to hasten their calculations, accepting DM-3 in order to complete the calculations within 1D minutes (assume each pirate ship has a base DM+2 to Astrogation checks unless otherwise stated).

If a pirate ship fails the Astrogation check, throw 2D again. On a 10+, the pirates jump anyway despite the incorrect calculations, and misjump. If the referee wishes to bring those adversaries back again, assume they misjump somewhere in the Reach. Otherwise, they are never seen again.

Optionally, the referee can make the Astrogation check secretly, so the Travellers are unsure whether or not they are jumping to the right location. A failed check results in a misjump.

We Don't Have Four Ships!

To unlock the map, the Travellers need four particle beam sources. Normally, that means four ships fitted with particle beams. The Travellers could get away with building some jury-rigged satellites fitted with particle beams, battery packs and computers (requiring a Mechanics check, 1D hours, and Cr50000 in parts, in addition to the particle beam weapon). Alternatively, the Travellers can bargain with the rival pirates for the use of their particle weapons.

Note that the closest source of particle beams for purchase is Salif.

6. THE HIDDEN STATION

A successful jump brings the Travellers to a lonely outpost in the void. Old starlight illuminates an antique space station, with the crest of the Sindalian Star Guard clearly visible on the hull. Mercifully, the Travellers also detect a large reserve of hydrogen in the station's fuel tanks; clearly, this place was used as a secret refueling depot by the Star Guard more than two thousand years ago.

As the Travellers approach the docking port, an automated message activates and plays over short-range radio.

This is Admiral Gani Peras of the Star Guard. This station is off limits to unauthorised personnel. If you attempt to dock, this station will automatically self-destruct. Officers of the Star Guard with Ducal-level clearance, transmit your authorisation codes before attempting to dock.

The same codes used to open the globes can deactivate the station's autodestruct. Transmitting those codes triggers another message from Gani Peras.

This station holds the contents of the Imperial Vault of the Star Dragon. I implore you, use this treasure with wisdom and humility. The mistakes of the old dynasty must not be repeated. I have done my duty to Humaniti; I ask you to do likewise and wish you good luck. Admiral Gani Peras, signing off.

EXPLORING THE STATION

There are two other ships docked at the station. Both are identical to the *Harrier* given to the Travellers at the start of the campaign, but both require extensive maintenance and refitting before they can fly again. They were stripped of all spare parts; at a guess, to provide for a third *Harrier* that left here with Gani and her crew. There is no clue as to where the Great Admiral went after the war.

The fuel tanks contain some 20,000 + 2D x 1,000 tons of refined hydrogen.

In the main cargo bay of the station, the Travellers find the treasure of Sindal, the treasure that Gani Peras brought from Noricum on the eve of its destruction.

The treasure stands in mute ranks; line after line of warheads.

The Sindalian empire's strength was not in gold or jewels or spice or iridium; it was in atomics and plague bombs. Gani tricked the last emperor into giving up his doomsday retaliatory strike.

THE TREASURE

There are 24 atomic warheads and 24 plague warheads, each designed to fit a torpedo launcher. The atomic weapons, while devastating in effect (treat them as high-strength nuclear torpedoes, inflicting 2DD damage) are very much secondary to the punitive plague. These artificial viral and bacteriological weapons were developed at the high end of TL14, and can overcome most commonly available countermeasures. In game terms, if a plague weapon is dropped on a populated planet, roll 2D and apply the following DMs:

+1	per TL below 14
-1	per TL above 15
+2	per extra warhead deployed
-DM	equal to the Population code of the planet
-2	if the planetary population is dispersed (agricultural planet or garden world)
+2	if the planetary population is especially concentrated (asteroid or hostile atmosphere)
-2	if the planet has a sizeable alien minority population
-4	if the planet has a majority alien population

If the result is 11+, that planet's population is wiped out entirely.

On a result of 8-10, reduce the Population score by 1D (remember, the Population score is an exponent, so a drop of 2 means a 99% mortality rate). On a 5-7, reduce the Population score by 1 (90% mortality). On a 4-, the plague does not kill enough people to warrant a change in the planet's status, but still causes a mortality rate of 1Dx10%.

For example, Petyr Vallis drops six plague warheads on the Aslan world of Khusai (Tliowaha/0403). The DMs are as follows:

+10 (five extra warheads)
+2 (TL12)
-6 (Population 6)
-2 (Agricultural)
-4 (Majority Aslan)

For a total DM of +0. On a throw of 8+, he kills millions of Aslan.

A planet struck by a successful biological attack may fall into chaos even if the population survive (Government Type becomes 0, Law Level becomes 0), and/or be designated a Red Zone.

The use of weapons of mass destruction against a civilian planetary population is an abhorrent crime. Should the Travellers use a weapon openly, it counts as a double Atrocity if used against a world not aligned with a great power (including worlds of the opposing power), and an octuple-strength Atrocity if used against a world of a great power (so, Petry Vallis' Imperial standing would drop by 2D if he bombed Khusai, while his Aslan standing would drop by 8D).

Formerly allied worlds may also turn against the Travellers if they are discovered to have used WMDs.

Finding a buyer for the punitive plagues is unlikely, at best – these goods are literally toxic.

THE TREASURE HUNTERS

What do the various hunters do if they discover the Treasure of Sindal?

- **haut-Belzoni**: Reports the discovery to the Imperium. Within six months, an Imperial Planet-class heavy cruiser, the *Sentinel*, arrives from Tobia to take custody of the weapons.
- **Faihlokh's Company**: Try to sell their share on Theev. Faihlokh is found dead in an alley on Theev a week later; the weapons end up in the hands of one of the warring worlds on the Dustbelt Main, like Tyr or Acis.
- **The Proactive Recycling Company**: Sell the location of the weapons to the Imperium for a nominal fee.
- **Petyr Vallis**: Deploys the weapons against the Aslan Hierate, targeting key worlds like Tliowaha.
- **The Travellers**: That is up to them. Do they bury the warheads? Sell them? Blackmail worlds with them? Or do they repeat the follies of Sindal and Drinax, and use them to keep their allies in line…

THE PIRATE GANGS

These three pirate gangs exemplify three different sorts of piracy. Faihlokh's Raiders are desperate thugs who fell into piracy hoping to get rich quickly. The PRC are a legitimate company taking advantage of the lawless Reach to supplement their income through piracy and mercenary work. Vallis' Company are pirates in name only – they see themselves as heroes fighting an oppressive invader.

FAIHLOKH'S RAIDERS

The raiders are a small pirate band, operating primarily in the Borderlands subsector. They possess two ships – a 100-ton Type-S Scout called *Lucky Misjump* and an Aslan-built *Eakhau* trader, the *Tai'ao*.

Lucky Misjump: Type-S Scout, Double Turret (pulse lasers)

Tai'ao: *Eakhau*-class Trader, Pop-Up Double Turrets (beam lasers) x 2, Particle Barbette x 2

FAIHLOKH

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Aslan			Male	34
STR	11	**INT**	6	**SKILLS**
DEX	8	**EDU**	7	Astrogation 1, Drive 0, Electronics (comms) 1, Engineer (power) 2, Flyer 0, Gunner (turret) 3, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Heavy Weapons (man portable) 2, Independence 2, Leadership 2, Melee (axe) 1, Recon 2, Tactics (military) 2, Tactics (naval) 2, Tolerance 1, Vacc Suit 2
END	12	**SOC**	6	
EQUIPMENT				Combat Armour (+15), Reaver's Axe (4D), Taoyuhrir Heavy Machine Gun (4D+3, Auto 4)

An Aslan warrior, exiled from his clan for dishonourable conduct, Faihlokh stole a clan trading ship and went into the Reach to seek his fortune

DAI KINNEAR

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	26

STR	6	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	8	EDU	5	Animals 0, Astrogation 1, Athletics 0, Awareness 2, Broker 1, Carouse 2, Deception 1, Engineer 0, Gunner (turret) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Investigate 1, Mechanic 1, Medic 0, Navigation 1, Persuade 2, Pilot 0, Recon 1, Survival 2, Telepathy 3, Telekinesis 0, Vacc Suit 0
END	7	SOC	4	
PSI	12			
EQUIPMENT				Flak Jacket (+6), Body Pistol (3D-3)

Dai comes from the primitive world of Marduk, a tribal planet that fears outsiders. She is a powerful natural psion, and her powers were honed by a secret sect on her world that inherited traditions from one of the old Psionic Institutes. When she sensed Faihlokh's alien mind, it awoke in her a desire to travel and explore space. She has become a surprisingly adept spacefarer.

PROACTIVE RECYCLING CORPORATION

The PRC started out as a rescue and resupply service for traders and tourists on the Imperium/Florian League trade route. If a ship got into difficulty, the PRC would sent out a search party with spare parts and technical supplies to repair it. If the damaged ship was too badly damaged to repair, they would pay the owner a nominal sum and salvage it for spare parts. A few years ago, when their supply of parts from the Imperium ran dry, the PRC turned to piracy to restock their reserves. 90% of the company's income comes from legitimate repair and salvage, but they also prey on other pirates, tramps and free traders.

The PRC currently operates six ships out of their base on Olo.

Invigilator: *Star Ray*-class Interceptor, Double Turret (beam lasers) x 2

Bigjob: Type-R Subsidised Merchant, Pop-Up Triple Turrets (missile racks) x 2, Pop-Up Double Turret (sandcaster, pulse laser)

Lyonesse III: Type-Y Yacht, Pop-Up Triple Turret (pulse lasers)

Scarab II: *Vulture*-class Salvage Hauler, Double Turret (pulse lasers), Double Turret (sandcaster, missile rack)

Cicada: *Vulture*-class Salvage Hauler, Double Turret (pulse lasers), Double Turret (sandcaster, missile rack)

Death's Actuary: *Star Ray*-class Interceptor, Double Turret (beam lasers) x 2

PRESIDENT YANG

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	46

STR	8	INT	10	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	11	Admin 4, Astrogation 2, Athletics (dexterity) 3, Broker 3, Deception 2, Electronics (comms) 1, Electronics (computers) 2, Electronics (remote ops) 2, Gambler 1, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Medic 2, Persuade 2, Recon 1, Tactics (naval) 2, Vacc Suit 2
END	8	SOC	8	

EQUIPMENT -

The current head of the corporation, Yang is an intensely pragmatic man. His followers joke that his brain is slaved to the accounting computer, as he evaluates every situation according to how it will benefit the company. He can be charming and effusive when he wishes, but the cold calculations are always there behind his eyes.

PRC

Proactive Recycling Corporation

PETYR VALLIS' COMPANY

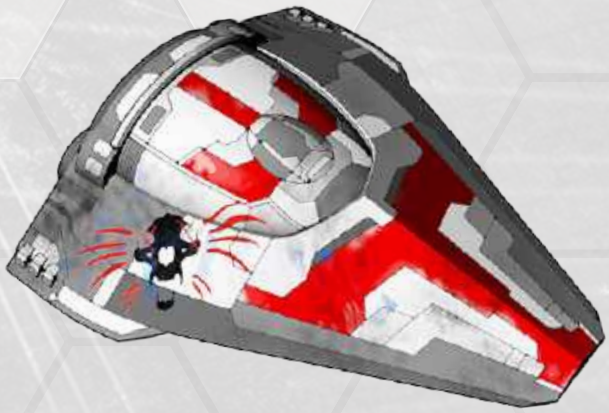
In a relatively short time, Vallis has managed to rally a sizeable flotilla of ships together from worlds that fear the Aslan Hierate. The young captain has a vendetta against the Aslan, but most of his followers are more interested in claiming booty than slowing the Aslan expansion into the Trojan Reach.

While Vallis claims the loyalty of some twenty ships, only four are within range to play a part in this adventure.

Lionsbane: Corsair, Small Railgun Bay, Small Particle Beam Bay, Particle Barbette, Triple Turrets (sandcaster, beam lasers x2) x 2, Triple Turret (missile racks)

Vengeance: *Buccaneer*-class Blockade Runner, Double Turrets (pulse lasers) x 2, Double Turrets (sandcaster, pulse laser) x 2

Stalker: Type-A3 Fast Trader, Particle Barbette x 2



Dancing Bear: Captured *Tyeliy*-class Messenger, Triple Turret (pulse lasers), Single Turret (missile rack)

PETYR VALLIS

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	26

				SKILLS
STR	9	INT	8	Astrogation 2, Athletics (dexterity) 2, Carouse 1, Deception 2, Electronics (remote ops) 1, Electronics (sensors) 1, Engineer 0, Gunner (turret) 3, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Leadership 3, Mechanic 2, Melee (blade) 3, Pilot (spacecraft) 4, Recon 2, Science 0, Stealth 1, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	8	EDU	9	
END	11	SOC	5	

EQUIPMENT	Boarding Vacc Suit (+11), Cutlass (3D), Gauss Pistol (3D, Auto 2)

Vallis comes from a long line of spacefarers; his family have been nomadic traders in the Reach for many generations. A decade ago, the family flotilla strayed into territory claimed by an Aslan. The Aslan attacked, killing Vallis' entire family. He escaped in a battered scout, and spent time since rallying support for a secret war against his family's killers. While he hates all Aslan, he reserves a special hatred for the *Hrakoea* clan.

HOKMAH

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	122

				SKILLS
STR	4	INT	8	Admin 3, Advocate 4, Astrogation 3, Athletics (dexterity) 4, Broker 3, Carouse 5, Deception 3, Diplomat 2, Gambler 2, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Jack-of-all-Trades 2, Leadership 1, Mechanic 2, Streetwise 4, Tactics (naval) 3, Vacc Suit 2
DEX	5	EDU	12	
END	3	SOC	8	

EQUIPMENT	-

A veteran pirate, Hokmah is Vallis' chief counsellor and aide. The old space dog is too fragile to run around cutting throats or firing missiles, but his knowledge of the Trojan Reach makes him invaluable.

C H A P T E R - N I N E

THE GAME OF SUN & SHADOW

'Once every few years, we head out on patrol, fly the sunburst, catch the dumb pirates, and send the smart ones running for the shadows. It doesn't put a stop to piracy, but it's the Reach. Nothing will ever make those stars safe. We just play a game, a game of sun and shadow. And that's all right – because the real game hasn't started yet. That game begins when the Aslan cross the border.'

- Captain Lenat, in private conversation

This adventure takes place throughout the Trojan Reach sector and begins on Pax Rulin.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

This adventure is divided into two strands. In the primary strand, the Travellers must deal with an incursion into their space – an Imperial punitive fleet, sent to hunt down pirates and corsairs who prey on trade convoys. Normally, such fleets sweep through the sector like a summer storm, sending any pirate bands fleeing to marginal systems, but making no lasting change. This time, though, it is different. The commander of the fleet is an ambitious young noble eager to make a name for himself, and he is not leaving the Reach until he brings every pirate captain back in chains. Do the Travellers run and hide, try to take advantage of the threat to rally the pirates of the Reach to their banner, or do they risk attacking the Imperial fleet directly!

In the second strand, the Travellers take on the roles of personnel in the fleet. They roll up mid-ranking naval personnel and participate in pirate-hunting operations.

You can intersperse the events of this adventure with those of other adventures in the campaign, either published segments or your own creations. *The Game of Sun and Shadow* unfolds over the course of nearly a year of game time. The suggested order of events is described in the Sun and Shadow table.

Sun and Shadow

Pirates	Navy
Pirate Hunters (3)	The New Captain (1)
Sun and Shadow (5)	Transiting the Reach (2)
In Chains (6)	The Grand Design (4)
The Duke's Niece (7)	Planetary Assault (8)
Ending the Game (9)	

1. **The New Captain:** The Naval campaign begins; the Navy Travellers of the 198th Punitive Flotilla learn of their new commander, Vice-Admiral Krond.
2. **Transiting the Reach:** The 198th moves out and crosses the Reach. En route, the Navy Travellers must deal with internal dissent and troublesome civilians.
3. **Pirate Hunters:** The Pirate Travellers learn of the approaching Flotilla. From now on, they are in danger of being hunted by the Imperium.
4. **The Grand Design:** The Navy Travellers are sent to find the origin of the pirate attacks on shipping in the reach…
5. **Sun and Shadow:** …and so the Pirate Travellers must ensure their base of operations remains secret.
6. **In Chains (Optional):** The Pirate Travellers attempt to rescue their imprisoned comrades.
7. **The Duke's Niece (Optional):** Krond's betrothed visits the Reach – do the Pirate Travellers risk kidnapping her?
8. **Planetary Assault (Optiona):** Vice-Admiral Krond has his target, and the full force of the Imperium is brought to bear upon it.
9. **Ending the Game:** The Pirate Travellers deal with the naval problem, and the Navy Travellers decide their futures…

Running this Adventure

Unlike the other adventures, *The Game of Sun and Shadow* is not a semi-linear narrative composed of scenes and encounters. Instead, it is a collection of potential events and subsystems that expand on the standard rules for this campaign. A larger amount of improvisation may be required on the part of the referee than usual as a result of this greater scope.

Timing

Alternate between the two strands of events. You could switch on a session-by-session basis ('this week, we're playing navy, and it's back to the pirates in two weeks' time!') or as events dictate ('ok, your naval Travellers arrive back at the Flotilla and report in. Cool. Let's switch to the pirates for the rest of the evening'). A talented referee could even weave events together with dramatic cliff-hangers ('the pirate ship fires again just as you're about to jump. The missiles come at you, closer and closer....and... meanwhile on Drinax, your pirates are having dinner with the Princess...')

Don't Cross the Stands

The primary Travellers of the *Pirates of Drinax* campaign are, of course, the pirates. The Navy Travellers exist to give a different perspective on the events of this adventure. The Travellers play both at different stages, but if the two ever come close to meeting, then the Travellers revert to playing the pirates and the referee takes over the navy personnel.

CREATING THE NAVAL TRAVELLERS

Before commencing this part of the campaign, the Travellers should create a group of naval personnel using the conventional *Traveller* career rules. Everyone should end up in either the Marines or the Navy. Travellers may attempt other careers first, but any who do not finish in the Marines or Navy may not be used. Any rolls for the Draft send the Traveller to the navy.

When determining Contacts, any Traveller may take a Contact to the Old Woman, Captain Kaja Lenat, the commander of the *Planet*-class Heavy Cruiser *Eurisko*, or to any of the other key characters of this section. Travellers may also choose to roll on the *Eurisko Tour of Duty* table instead of the normal Navy or Marines Events tables.

The Navy Travellers are all crewmen, officers or marines on board the *Eurisko* or one of her escorts.

THE EURISKO

The *Eurisko* is a Planet-class Heavy Cruiser (see *Ships of the Reach* page 53) – 75,000 tons of superdense armour and titanic drives, with a crew complement of nearly 1,200 souls. Her primary weapon is her spinal mounted particle beam, but she also carries a wealth of smaller cannons, torpedo barbettes and meson bays. Her home port is the Imperial Naval Base at Pax Rulin. While Pax Rulin has larger warships berthed there, as befits the mainstay of Imperial strength in the Trojan Reach, the *Eurisko* is one of the most honoured and feared fighting ships in the sector.

Unlike a conventional Heavy Cruiser, the *Eurisko* carries fighters – she sacrifices two modular cutters, a pinnace and some cargo space for a flight of twenty 10-ton multi-purpose fighters.

Eurisko Tour of Duty

2D	Event
2	Disaster! The first time you roll this result, describe how Captain Lenat saved you. The second and subsequent times, roll on the Mishap table, but you are not ejected from this career.
3	Pirate hunting in the Outrim Void gets dangerous. Gain Gunner 1 or Gun Combat 1. If you wish, throw that skill 8+. If you fail, roll on the Injury table and gain a named pirate as an Enemy. If you succeed, gain DM+4 to your next advancement roll.
4	The Captain gives you a special assignment. Gain any one skill.
5	A border skirmish goes hot. Gain one of Electronics (sensors) 1, Tactics (naval) 1, Mechanic 1, or Engineer (any) 1.
6	Another day, another one of the Captain's training drills. Throw EDU 8+ to gain any skill.
7	Life Event. Roll on the Life Events table.
8	War games hone your skills on the border. Do you push your luck? Throw Recon 8+ or Tactics (naval) 8+ to succeed. If you fail, skip your next Advancement roll. If you succeed, gain any skill and DM+2 to your next Advancement roll.
9	You discover some of your crewmates are involved in illegal activity. If you turn them in, gain an Enemy and DM+1 to your next advancement roll. If you conceal their crimes, gain Gambling, Deception and a bonus Benefit roll.
10	The *Eurisko* is reviewed by the Sector Duke. Gain either Art (performer) 1, Carouse 1, Diplomat 1, or Steward 1.
11	The Captain sees promise in you. Gain Tactics (naval) or Leadership, and DM+4 to your next advancement roll.
12	You serve the *Eurisko* well. You are automatically promoted or gain a commission.

KEY CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN KAJA LENAT

THE OLD WOMAN

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	68

STR	6	INT	10	SKILLS
DEX	5	EDU	11	Admin 3, Astrogation 3, Athletics (dexterity) 3, Broker 1, Carouse 1, Deception 2, Diplomat 1, Electronics (comms) 2, Electronics (computers) 2, Electronics (sensors) 2, Engineer (power) 2, Gambler 1, Gunner (turret) 2, Gunner (capital) 2, Gun Combat (energy) 1, Heavy Weapons (man portable) 1, Investigate 2, Jack-of-all-Trades 2, Leadership 5, Mechanic 4, Melee (blade) 3, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Recon 1, Science (planetology) 2, Steward 1, Tactics (naval) 4, Vacc Suit 3
END	10	SOC	11	

EQUIPMENT	-

Playing the Old Woman:

- Talk in a croak.
- Never back down.

The commander of the *Eurisko* and veteran of skirmishes and pirate hunting expeditions along the Reach, Lenat's reputation as a harsh taskmistress and dogged fighter underestimates her charisma and leadership ability. She knows what her ship and crew are capable of at their best, and does not tolerate anything less. Those looking for a lazy assignment do not last long on board her ship. She will never be counted among the great strategic minds of the galaxy, but when it comes to small engagements, her courage and understanding of her ship make her formidable.

COMMANDER STEYLAND

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	42

STR	6	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	8	EDU	9	Admin 3, Advocate 2, Astrogation 2, Athletics (dexterity) 3, Electronics (comms) 2, Electronics (computers) 1, Electronics (sensors) 3, Engineer 0, Gunner (turret) 1, Investigate 2, Mechanic 1, Medic 2, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Recon 1, Tactics (naval) 2, Vacc Suit 2
END	6	SOC	9	

EQUIPMENT	-

Playing Steyland:

- Never show emotion that does not seem scripted.

Lenat's executive officer, Steyland is a solid, by-the-book sort. Doggedly loyal and proudly unimaginative, he applies naval doctrine to the letter. He loathes pirates, considering them the worst sort of space-faring scum.

'FIXER' BRELL

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	34

STR	8	INT	9	SKILLS
DEX	8	EDU	7	Broker 2, Carouse 2, Deception 1, Engineer (jump) 3, Gambler 1, Mechanic 4, Persuade 1, Streetwise 2
END	5	SOC	6	

EQUIPMENT	-

Playing Brell:

- Slouch, leer, give the impression of being slimy.

If Brell were not a mechanical genius, he would never have lasted on board the *Eurisko*. He is a con artist. He slacks when it comes to his duties, spending his time organising gambling rings, smuggling dust-spice, or fulfilling the crew's baser needs. Fixer Brell always has what you need. The Old Woman would have got rid of him long ago if it was not for Brell's uncanny talent for battlefield repairs – he can reroute around a damaged system in seconds, or unjam a clogged nuclear torpedo by kicking it. Lenat has occasionally threatened to turn Brell into a one-man frozen watch, but so far the Fixer keeps on fixin'.

RHODA 'RED' VOIDBORN

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	30

STR	7	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	11	EDU	6	Astrogation 1, Athletics (dexterity) 3, Electronics (comms) 1, Gunner (turret) 2, Pilot (small craft) 3, Recon 2, Tactics (naval) 2, Vacc Suit 2
END	7	SOC	5	

EQUIPMENT	-

Playing Red:

- Talk fast.
- Be aggressive.

'Red' was born on some pirate station. Under Imperial law, piracy may be punishable by death, and so at the age of eleven, Red's whole family were arrested, tried and thrown out an airlock. An Imperial naval officer – long rumoured to be the Old Woman herself – took pity on the child and brought her back to the Imperium. Red grew up as an orphan on Pax Rulin, hanging around the fringes of the Naval bases. Today, Red's one of the best pilots on the *Eurisko*.

VICE-ADMIRAL KROND

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	34

STR	8	INT	6	SKILLS
DEX	8	EDU	10	Admin 2, Carouse 3, Diplomat 2, Electronics (comms) 1, Leadership 1, Persuade 2, Tactics (naval) 1
END	10	SOC	13	

EQUIPMENT	-

Playing Krond:

- Play the wealthy idiot, but remember there is an iron fist behind it.

Family counts for a great deal in the Imperium – especially in Tobia sector, where the noble families trace their lines back to Capital and the core worlds. Krond's rise in the Tobia Planetary Navy might be seen as meteoric from the outside; those inside can see the rocket booster strapped to his back in the form of his name and family connections. He was recently betrothed to the niece of the Sector Duke, and he parleyed this increase in influence and social status into his own fleet command.

Krond may come across as a wealthy idiot, and certainly he ticks all the checkboxes, with his gang of sycophantic hangers-on, drinking binges, disdain for the lower classes, and planet-sized ego. However, he is not to be underestimated. Ambition keeps his mind sharp and his spirit hungry.

OGLEBY

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	42

STR	12	INT	10	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	7	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Clairvoyance 2, Deception 3, Gun Combat (energy) 2, Melee (unarmed) 2, Stealth 2, Steward 3, Streetwise 2, Telepathy 5, Teleportation 2
END	14	SOC	4	
PSI	12			

EQUIPMENT	-

Playing Ogleby:

- Stare more than talk and when you speak, use a low, slow voice.

Ogleby is Krond's best friend, chief servant, advisor, jester – and his monster. Ogleby looks absurd next to the handsome and dashing Krond; like someone tried to cram a hippopotamus into a vacc suit. The hulking Ogleby clawed his way up from the streets of Tobia by dint of his utter lack of conscience – and his secret telepathic abilities. Ogleby influences enemies of Krond, driving them into madness. His primary target in this campaign is Captain Lenat, but once she dies (see page 162), he turns his attention on the Travellers.

1. THE NEW CAPTAIN

Pax Rulin is the lynchpin of Imperial defences in the Trojan Reach. This port was founded when the Imperium was young and these asteroids have seen nearly a thousand years of loyal service by generations of Navy spacers. As this segment of the campaign begins, the *Eurisko* is docked at one of the supply depots, refuelling. All the Navy Travellers are on board the ship, deep in some cargo bay. Some may be engaged in maintenance or minor repairs; others may be off duty and just hanging around. The ship currently has only a skeleton crew, as most personnel are onshore at the base.

Fixer Brell approaches one of the Travellers (ideally, a low-ranking officer or someone with the Engineer skill), and asks for a favour.

'*Here, sign off on this,'* he says, offering an electronic pad.

The form declares that a fuel pump is irreparable and must be replaced. Examining the pump with a successful Mechanic check (EDU) reveals it is functioning perfectly, but the monitoring panel that displays the pump's status is suspiciously faulty. If someone wanted to fake a pump failure, they could do so by reprogramming the monitor. If this is pointed out, Brell says that he has a buddy in the Pax Rulin junkyard who will pay good Credits for a working pump. The pump can be replaced from Pax Rulin stores in a matter of hours, and no-one will ever be the wiser. Brell will even cut the Traveller in for Cr1000 if he signs off on the replacement request form. If challenged, Brell acknowledges there is a chance that the monitor might be faulty, and 'fixes' it.

The whistle of the public-address system sounds, and the voice of the captain rings throughout the ship.

'Attention all hands, this is the captain. We are about to receive visitors. All officers, report to the docking bay in dress uniform. All hands, attend to your sections.'

As the Travellers scramble to make ready for these visitors, one of them passes a sensor station. On the screen are several new contacts – several small patrol and escort vessels, a titanic 30,000-ton megafreighter named *Prophet Zomon* that is nearly as half as big as the *Eurisko* – and a 600-ton superyacht. The superyacht, *Sunspinner*, approaches the *Eurisko* to dock with her.

NEW ORDERS

Have each officer make a Routine (6+) SOC check (DEX). Those who succeed make it to the docking bay in full dress uniform with all expected accoutrements in time; those who fail rush in at the last minute, and suffer DM-1 to their next interaction with Vice-Admiral Krond.

Krond arrives wearing an Imperial Navy uniform, not the Tobia Planetary Navy uniform he is entitled to (see *The Trojan Reach* page 209 for why this is both significant and provocative). He is followed into the docking bay by a gaggle of sycophants and 'advisors', some of whom wear Tobia naval uniforms, but others wear absurdly over-equipped vacc suits that have clearly never seen actual vacuum, or even battle dress. Ogleby shuffles after them, dragging along Krond's baggage. After that ludicrous party come a squad of Imperial Marines, and after *them* a willowy young woman in a shimmering gown with a tiara on her head. A successful Recon or Streetwise check (SOC) recognises her as Eridana, the niece of the Sector Duke, recently betrothed to Krond.

Captain Lenat greets Krond stiffly.

'My lord, I was not informed of your visit – or your transfer to the Imperial service.'

'A temporary transfer, as part of our mission. Recall your crew and make ready to depart, captain,' orders Krond, as he hands her a message-globe bearing the seal of the Duke of Tobia. 'We jump for the Outrim Void tonight!'

The captain is too disciplined to show emotion in public. She takes the globe, bows, then departs. Krond turns to his bride-to-be.

'Now, I must bid you adieu, sweet Eridana, until my task is done. I beg you, think fondly of me, and give my regards to His Grace your Uncle.'

He is clearly putting on a show for the crowd. Eridana embraces him and whispers something in his ear, then she too leaves. Krond addresses the assembled crew.

'Brave souls! I am Vice-Admiral Krond, of the Tobia Planetary Guard. By the command of His Grace the Duke of Tobia, I hereby declare the Eurisko *to be the flagship of the 198th Punitive Flotilla. By the Iridium Throne, we shall rid the Outrim Void of piracy once and for all!'*

2. TRANSITING THE REACH

The 198th flotilla, also known as the Eurisko and whatever escort ships were available at that moment, along with the *Prophet Zomon,* departs from Pax Rulin and jumps into what Krond poetically called the Outrim Void. All the flotilla ships are jump-3 capable, so their route is as follows:

Pax Rulin > Caraz > Magen > (into Sindal subsector) Albe > Realgar > Chalchiutlicu > Palindrome > (into Tobia subsector) > Boulder > Exocet > (into Borderlands subsector) > Arunisiir > Tech-World > Byrni.

This is a journey taking twelve jumps and more than six months of travel.

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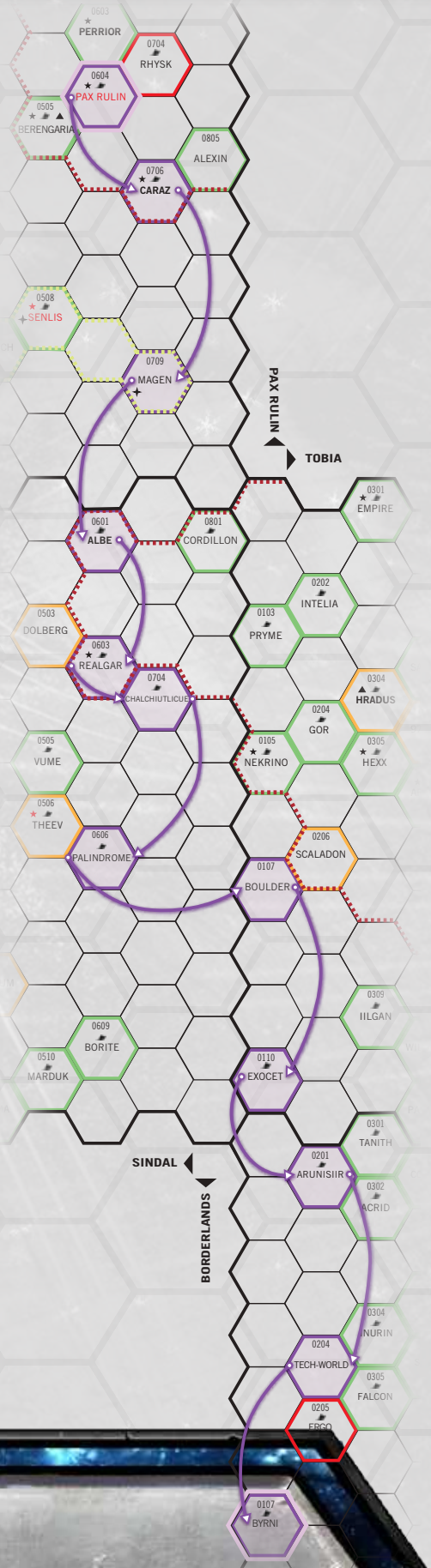


THE 198TH PUNITIVE FLOTILLA

- *Planet*-class Heavy Cruiser (75,000 tons, see *Ships of the Reach* page 53). *Eurisko* is the flagship of the flotilla.
- *Galoot*-class Megafreighter (30,000 tons, see *Ships of the Reach* page 48). The *Prophet Zomon* carries supplies for the fleet. Oddly, she also carries a large load of cargo webbing, the sort used to support smaller vessels for transport in a cargo bay. Her bay doors have also been refitted to accept ships up to 1,000 tons.
- *Ritchey*-class Escort (8,000 tons, see *Ships of the Reach* page 44). While dwarfed by the Eurisko, old *Gorluun* from the Subsector naval forces still outguns any pirate in the Reach twenty times over. The escort's computer systems are notoriously fragile and prone to embarrassing malfunctions, so *Gorluun* is never deployed in anything that might resemble a fair fight.
- *Queen Elizabeth*-class (1,200 tons, see *Ships of the Reach* page 36). A dilapidated liner, the *Petal* was bound for a breaker's yard before Krond spotted it. The once-luxurious ship has been converted into a prison hulk.
- 6 x *Gazelle*-class Close Escorts (400 tons, see *High Guard* page 130). Like the *Eurisko*, these ships (*Sapphire, Morluun Lake, Black Knight, Duke Alphonse, Ignel* and *Sentinel*) are on loan from Pax Rulin.
- 3 x *Tenders* (1,000 tons, see *Ships of the Reach* page 32) *Angel of Mons, Mastersmith* and *Excelsior* are repair and supply ships for the fleet.
- 1 x *Ulfhednar*-class Escort Carrier (2,000 tons, see *Ships of the Reach* page 40): Belonging to the Tobia Planetary Guard, *Storm of Arrows* carries a swarm of small fighters.
- 4 x *Patrol Corvettes* (400 tons, *Traveller Core Rulebook* page 174 or *High Guard* page 136): Also from Tobia, the cruisers *Courage, Conviction, Lion Hunter* and *Tobia's Bright Lance* serve much the same role in the fleet as the *Gazelles*.
- *Watchdog*-class Fleet Picket (500 tons, see *Ships of the Reach* page 23): The fleet's main scout is the *Glint*.

In addition to this core of a more than a dozen ships, the flotilla picks up and loses other ships as it crosses the Reach. Small Jump-4 couriers bring messages back and forth between the flotilla and the Imperium, although with a communications delay of several months, Krond is effectively lord of his own little pocket empire.

While the Travellers may be part of the *Eurisko*'s crew, they get moved around as required by circumstances. Sometimes, they might be assigned to reinforce a Gazelle or Patrol Corvettes crew, or take charge of a fighter wing from the *Storm of Arrows*. At other times, they will be sent on a mission on the *Glint*.

ENCOUNTERS EN ROUTE

The Travellers should be involved in as many of these encounters as is plausible.

Caraz

The Caraz starport is officially Class E, but has Class A refuelling facilities and can supply the thirsty fleet. The bigger problem is the massive overpopulation; any ships docking at Caraz need to watch for stowaways. The Travellers are assigned to guard the *Angel of Mons* when she lands to refuel. Ask the Travellers how secure they wish to make the refuelling station – do they keep a low profile to avoid drawing attention, or do they station armed guards everywhere and order them to shoot to kill.

Assign a DM based on their response from -4 to +4 (DM-4 for a minimal presence, DM+4 for shoot to kill policies, land mines, and making anyone who takes a step towards the ship considered a hostile target) and throw 2D. On a 4-11, everything goes smoothly. On a 3-, locals try to rush the ship – do the Travellers open fire on civilians, or let a few stow away? On a 12+, an over-eager marine shoots a local child who was nowhere near the ship.

Magen

Magen is part of the Senlis Foedorate, an extremely minor stellar power that rules three whole systems. Krond's route through the Foedorate is technically permissible but, like any polity, the Foedorate tends to be upset when a fleet violates their border. The Travellers are on board one of the smaller flotilla ships when the flotilla jumps from Caraz, and through the vagaries of jumpspace they arrive several hours ahead of the rest. A Foedorate vessel – a 600-ton Corsair captured from some pirate decades ago (roll three times on the Spacecraft Quirks table on page 164 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*) challenges the 'intruder' and demands they leave Foedorate space. Do the Travellers try to stall, fight back, or obey and risk losing touch with the flotilla?

Boulder

Krond arranged for a fuel depot to be constructed for the fleet at Boulder, which would normally be unable to cope with the needs of a fleet this size. However, on arrival, the Travellers spot an opportunistic Free Trader siphoning off a few dozen tons from the 50,000 dton depot. Krond orders the Free Trader destroyed as a pirate – do the Travellers deliberately miss?

Exocet

At Exocet, the flotilla runs into an Aslan trading expedition of a dozen small ships, mostly *Khtukhao*-class clan transports, but a few *Eakhau*-class traders too. One of them matches the description of a raider that attacked an Imperial-registered Free Trader four years ago, and Krond wants the raider captured and investigated. How do the Travellers examine the raider? The Aslan are not inclined to co-operate unless the characters force them to comply, but firing on an Aslan ship without provocation would be a diplomatic embarrassment.

SHIPBOARD ENCOUNTERS

Run these encounters as needed.

Proximity Alert

While one of the Travellers is at the helm (either of the *Eurisko*, a smaller spaceship, or a small craft), one of the Tobian Patrol Corvettes realises it is out of position and accelerates to get back into formation. The Patrol Corvette's pilot flies much, much too close to the Traveller's ship, risking a collision. The Traveller must make a Pilot check (DEX) to dodge the Patrol Corvette; failing means a collision that inflicts 5D damage on both ships.

Meeting Ogleby

The grotesque Ogleby demands that one of the Travellers install a holo-entertainment system in a lounge that has been claimed by Krond's circle of sycophants. The holo-system is the latest thing from the core worlds, and installing it means rewiring the computer systems on half the deck – a job that will take weeks. If the Travellers refuse, Ogleby threatens them. If they complain to Krond, he laughs, says that Ogleby can be 'quite blunt at times until you get to know his little ways' – then orders them to install the holo-entertainment system immediately.

Stirrings of Dissent

Red and some of the other members of the *Eurisko* crew approach the Travellers. They are unhappy about Krond's command – he has sidelined the Old Woman, he is a Planetary Navy dirt-sider, he is a fop, his coterie of drinking buddies are troublemaking idiots, he deliberately provoked the Foedorate, and so on – and want the Travellers' support. They are not plotting a mutiny or anything so dramatic, but want to have the crew on their side in case things get… confused. Normally, they would go straight to the Old Woman with this sort of problem, but she seems to have lost her nerve in the face of Krond's political support from his uncle-to-be, the Duke of Tobia. They also ask that the Travellers express their concerns to Krond or the Old Woman if they get the opportunity.

The Captain's Table

Seeking to take the temperature of the crew, Krond starts inviting randomly selected groups to dine with him and his friends once per jump, and the Travellers are asked to report to the Captain's Table. The Old Woman is there, but is overshadowed by Krond as he holds court for his friends and supporters. Ogleby serves the drinks, and tastes Krond's food for poison.

Krond puts forward a thesis to the Travellers:

'The pirate problem is a fraud, a fiction. Consider – the average pirate ship in the Outrim Void is a 200-ton Free Trader, retrofitted with a few paltry lasers. And what do they prey on? Other tramps and free traders! The merchant convoys are much too hard a target for those scamps. Why, a merchantman is more likely to fall victim to a misjump than a pirate. So, why do we hear so much about them? Why does every convoy have a naval escort? And why, I ask you, is the one hundredth and ninety-eight punitive expedition?

'I shall tell you. It suits the navy to tolerate piracy. I am sure Captain Lenat would agree that most punitive expeditions are more effective as combat training exercises than pirate hunts. They sharpen their cadets as my valet sharpens my sabre – but what good is a sabre if you never stab a chap with it? Furthermore, taxes and escort fees from the merchant convoys pay for fine ships like the Eurisko – and without pirates, those fees would be much reduced.

'I beg you, prove me wrong. Can any of you really argue that these vagabond raiders are an actual threat to the Imperium's interests?'

The Travellers may argue with Krond if they dare, or even raise the concerns of the crew. Krond will have none of it, and any Travellers who defy him get assigned the most dangerous or unpleasant missions for the rest of this adventure.

If the Travellers raise their concerns with the Old Woman, she counsels patience. She has dealt with men like Krond before, men who think that because they know one system, they know all of Charted Space. Trying to fight Krond means crossing the Sector Duke's current protégé. They need to wait for Krond to screw everything up all on his own, and then pick up the pieces when the Sector Duke withdraws his favour.

Malfunction

A fuel pump (the very one that Fixer Breen was meddling with) threatens to blow at the worst possible time – seconds before a jump, just as the hydrogen is being pumped to the jump engine to inflate the jump bubble. One of the Travellers must make a split-second decision.

- **Abort the Jump!** The rest of the fleet jumps ahead without the *Eurisko*'s protection. Worse, the battleship must now find more fuel.
- **Risk It**: Have the Traveller throw 2D. On an 8+, the *Eurisko* jumps successfully. On a 6+, she jumps successfully, but a compartment is flooded with high-pressure liquid hydrogen that expands explosively, killing 3D personnel and possibly injuring the Traveller. On a 2, the *Eurisko* misjumps, arriving 1D x 1D parsecs off course!
- **Repair It!** Fixing the pump is a Very Difficult (12+) Mechanic check (INT). If the Traveller succeeds, the ship jumps successfully. If he fails, resolve as per Risk It, but the Traveller sustains 4D damage from exploding hydrogen regardless of the result.

ON STATION

At the end of its long journey, the fleet arrives at its destination – the system of Byrni. According to Imperial Intelligence, the government of Byrni loathes pirates, so Krond picked this world as a base of operations. The Byrnese government are not especially enchanted by the prospect of a small Imperial fleet sitting on their doorstep, especially if Byrni has rejoined the Kingdom of Drinax (see *Treasure Ship*).

Krond's deployment schemes are as follows:

- The *Eurisko* remains in orbit of Byrni (until the events of *Planetary Assault* or *Ending the Game*).
- *Prophet Zomon* offloads its cargo onto Byrni. Any captured pirate ships are towed back to Byrni if possible.
- The *Petal* is used as a prison for any captive pirates.
- *Gorluun* is Krond's heavy hitter. The 8,000 ton escort gets sent to fly the flag or intimidate any troublesome worlds, as well as smash any pirate bases or strongholds.
- The *Gazelles* are his primary scouts and pirate hunters. He deploys them in three squadrons of two ships each.
- Two Tenders remain at Bynri; one follows the *Gorluun*.
- The *Storm of Arrows* carrier is partnered with one Gazelle squadron.
- One Patrol Corvette remains at Byrni, the other three form a hunting squadron.
- The Fast Picket goes in search of rumours and information; it uses its advanced sensors to scan likely systems for pirates.

Krond's long-term scheme is to return home to Tobia in glory, with the *Prophet Zomon* full of wrecked pirate ships and the *Petal* full of prisoners. See *In Chains,* page 165.

Punitive Action

Each month, roll 2D and consult the Punitive Action table to determine how effective the pirate hunters are that month. Actions by either group of Travellers may give a DM to the roll; for example, if the Pirate Travellers reveal the location of other pirates to the navy, that might grant DM+2 to the roll.

2D	Result
5 or less	No captures.
6-7	A handful of free traders, thieves and spacefaring thugs who barely count as pirates
8-9	A small number of pirate ships, none of special note. One port moves one step away from Haven.
10-11	A notable pirate ship (a Corsair or larger). Two ports move one step away from Haven
12+	Pirate base, named pirate (consult the Named Pirates table) or ally of the Pirate Travellers. Three ports move one step away from Haven.

Apply DM+1 per month of hunting after the first. (so, +0 in the first month, +1 in the second month, +2 in the third month and so on.) If this DM ever reaches +12, see *Planetary Assault* on page 169.

On a natural 1 or natural 6 for either dice, one of the Flotilla vessels is significantly damaged in the line of fire. It may be out of action for some months, or continue to serve but with reduced capabilities (missing turret, reduced thrust, etc.). On a double 1 or double 6, a small vessel is lost with all hands, or the *Gorluun* suffers significant damage.

Named Pirates

Pick one of the pirates listed below; if that pirate is still alive and active in your game. Optionally, roll 1D; on a 1-2, the pirate is killed by the Imperium. On a 3+, the pirate is arrested and imprisoned on board the *Petal* prison hulk.

Pirate	See Also
Petyr Vallis	*Honour Among Thieves* and *The Treasure of Sindal*
Admiral Darokyn	*Honour Among Thieves*
Hroal Irontooth	*Honour Among Thieves* and *Treasure Ship*
Failokh	*The Treasure of Sindal*
Proactive Recycling	*The Treasure of Sindal*
Mira Silverhand	*Honour Among Thieves*
Zheukvi	*The Game of Sun and Shadow*

Allies of the Pirate Travellers

If the Pirate Travellers have recruited other pirate bands or allies to their fleet, these allies may be arrested or killed by the Imperium.

Pirate hunting of the Pirate Travellers is handled in *Pirate Hunters*, on page 157.

For example, the Punitive Fleet has been searching for pirates for three months, giving them DM+2 to the Punitive Action roll. The referee rolls a 10, DM+2 for a total of 12. A Named Pirate is arrested, and three ports move away from Haven.

3. PIRATE HUNTERS

Meanwhile…

The infamous pirate Zhuekvi the Corsair contacts the Pirate Travellers (through some mutual contact – use Sal Dancet if you do not have anyone more appropriate in mind). If the Travellers are doing well and have at least six starports at Friendly or Haven status, then Zhuekvi wishes to join them and offers his fleet of four Corsairs to their cause. Otherwise, Zhuekvi merely wants to arrange a non-aggression pact, to ensure that the Travellers do not cross him and he does not interfere with them. He suggests they meet on the system of Thebus (Sindal/0309). There is a lovely little hunting lodge in the jungle near a big flat open plateau where they can land their ships and meet face to face.

Zhuekvi brings his favourite 400-ton Corsair, the *Big Bad Wolf*. The Travellers may take whatever ship they wish.

MEETING ZHUEKVI

It soon becomes evident that getting anything done with Zhuekvi means listening to his endless store of anecdotes about the good old days of piracy. Everything reminds him of another story – why, did they hear about the time he won a planet in a card game? Or how he stole this cutlass from Admiral Darokyn? Or how this hunting lodge reminds him of a place owned by his old drinking buddy Vlen Backett? Or… Have the Travellers make a Carouse check (END) and take the best result from among the group. If a Traveller succeeds, he gains information based on the Effect of the check.

1-2: Zhuekvi has heard rumours about another Punitive Flotilla. The Imperium sends these through every few years. Just stay away from the Imperium trade routes for a few months. Take a vacation. Zhuekvi intends to do just that!
3-4: Rumour has it that the leader of the flotilla's some young noble from Tobia. That makes a change – it is normally out of Pax Rulin. Still, one fat Imperial is the same as another, right?
5-6: Zhuekvi lets slip that his base is hidden in the Exe system. It is an asteroid out near the seventh planet.
7+: The Traveller impresses Zhuekvi so much that he has a friend for life. Add Zhuekvi the Corsair as an Ally.

Making a Deal: If the Travellers are here to make a deal with Zhuekvi, make a Diplomat check (INT), adding the Carouse checks as a Task Chain DM. On an 8+, Zhuekvi offers a mutually acceptable deal; on a 10+, he offers an excellent deal.

INCOMING!

Zhuekvi's second-in-command, one of his pups named Zhuekaza, runs in. They have detected three ships in orbit, and they are reading as Imperial Gazelles! They are clearly scanning the surface for the pirates. Zhuekvi curses; his Corsair is somewhat notorious. The Gazelles will be overhead in minutes.

If the Travellers take off and flee, they may be able to escape without being seen. Have their pilot make a Difficult (10+) Pilot check (DEX), with the following DMs:

+ Ship's sensor DM
+ the operator's Electronics (sensor) skill
+4 if the pirates are an Ally of the Imperium (Imperial Standing of 21+)
+2 if the pirates are Tolerated by the Imperium (Imperial Standing of 6+)
-2 if the pirates are an Irritant to the Imperium (Imperial Standing of -6 or more)
-4 if the pirates are Infamous in the Imperium (Imperial Standing of -21 or more)
-6 if the pirates are an Enemy of the Imperium (Imperial Standing of -40 or more)

Alternatively, the Travellers can stand and fight with Zhuekvi. There are three 400-ton Gazell-class Close Escorts. Zhuekvi is in a 400-ton Corsair, with two triple turrets containing two beam lasers and a missile rack, and a third carrying two beam lasers and a sandcaster.

If any of the Gazelles are destroyed, roll two dice, adding DM+1 for each critical hit suffered so far by the Imperials. On an 8+, they retreat.

THE HUNT BEGINS

From now until the Punitive Flotilla leaves the Reach, the following rules apply.

Increased Patrols

Apply DM+2 to the second dice when rolling for encounters using Prey Encounter Table (see Campaign Overview, page 14) in any of the following systems:

Borderland Subsector: Byrni, Ergo, Tech-World, Falcon, Sperle, Inurin, Exe, Argona
Tliowaha Subsector: Asim, Drinax, Torpol, Clarke, Blue, Pourne, Hilfer, Paal
Sindal Subsector: Oghma, Marduk, Thebys, Number One, Sailf, Palindrome, Yurne
Dpres Subsector: Aeis, Heccarda, Tyl.

If you are not using the Prey Encounter Table, then assume there is a greater chance of a naval encounter in those systems.

Imperial Spies and Informants

Whenever the Pirate Travellers visit a port, remember to roll for the Risk of Spies (see Campaign Overview, page 10). Under normal circumstances, that roll merely determines the chance that some scoundrel rats on the pirates to their enemy, but with Imperial Pirate Hunters in the region, the results become much more important and dangerous. Cross-reference the Effect of the roll with the Hunter Threat table.

The actions of the Travellers may apply DMs to this table. If they travel in disguise, keep a low profile and so on, apply a negative DM. If they break the law, cause massive property damage, draw attention or hang around the spaceport suspiciously, apply a positive DM.

The Travellers' Imperial Standing also modifies this roll.

-2 if the pirates are an Ally of the Imperium (Imperial Standing of 21+)
-1 if the pirates are Tolerated by the Imperium (Imperial Standing of 6+)
+1 if the pirates are an Irritant to the Imperium (Imperial Standing of -6 or more)
+2 if the pirates are Infamous in the Imperium (Imperial Standing of -21 or more)
+4 if the pirates are an Enemy of the Imperium (Imperial Standing of -40 or more)

Remember that attacking Imperial ships or troops (even in self-defence!) will lower Standing by at least 1D.

Re-roll any results that are contradictory. For example, the Flotilla has only one *Storm of Arrows*, so multiple results of 2 should be re-rolled.

Alternatively, instead of rolling on the Imperial Detachment table, the feferee may choose to raise the Suspicion Rating (see page 159) of Drinax by +2.

For example, the Travellers visit the world of Sperle, which is Hostile. They travel there in disguise, and succeed at a Deception check, so the referee applies DM-1 to the roll. Their Imperial Standing gives another DM-1. The Risk for Spies at a Hostile port is 2+. Rolling, he gets a 7. With DM-2 applied, that is a 5, so they pass by 3. An Imperial detachment will arrive at Sperle in 2D weeks. Rolling, the referee gets a 4 – they will be here in a month.

Unfortunately for the Travellers, their return journey coincides with the Imperial presence in the system. The referee rolls on the Imperial Detachment table, and gets a 10: two Close Escorts and four Light Fighters! The Travellers have a fight on their hands!

Imperial Detachment

2D	Spacecraft	Ground Troops
2	*Storm of Arrows* + 16 Light Fighters	100 Marines
3-4	2 Patrol Ships	50 Marines
5-6	1 Patrol Ship	20 Marines
7	5 Light Fighters + Modular Cutter	10 Marines
8-9	1 Gazelle Close Escort	20 Marines
10-11	2 Gazelle Close Escorts + 4 Light Fighters	50 Marines
12	*Gorluun*	100 Marines

The Traitor

During the events of *The Grand Design* and the corresponding period for the Pirate Travellers, *Sun and Shadow*, a private letter from Vice-Admiral Krond to his betrothed mysteriously gets send to Drinax instead. This letter contains vital intelligence about Krond's intentions. Someone in the fleet – the Traitor – betrayed their oath to the Imperial Navy. There are several possible traitors – choose one.

- **Captain Lenat**: Lenat believes Krond is endangering not only the Flotilla, but also the stability of the Reach and future of the Imperial Navy. She diverts the letter, then commits suicide to avoid the shame of breaking her oath.
- **Fixer Brell**: Brell sold the letter to make a quick buck.
- **Red:** Red's disillusioned with the Navy and now dreams of returning to piracy.
- **A Naval Traveller:** If any of the Naval Travellers have expressed the desire to turn pirate, then the referee should dangle this opportunity before them. Ogleby shoves a piece of paper into the Traveller's hands, and orders him to run down to the shuttle bay and get this letter onto the next courier ship home.

Hunter Threat

Effect	Result
1-2	An informant reports on the movement of the Travellers. Apply DM+2 to the next roll for Risk of Spies.
3-4	An Imperial detachment arrives in the system 2D weeks later and searches for the Travellers. If the Travellers left any clues to their next destination, the Imperials uncover these clues on a roll of 10+.
5-6	An Imperial detachment arrives in the system 1D weeks later and searches for the Travellers. If the Travellers left any clues to their next destination, the Imperials uncover these clues on a roll of 8+.
7-8	An Imperial detachment is in system and arrives 1D hours after the Travellers land.
9+	It is an ambush! Roll three times on the Imperial Detachment table for the opposition the Travellers face!

4. THE GRAND DESIGN

Once the Punitive Flotilla is in position, Krond sends out patrols on pirate hunting duty. He also sends out smaller elite teams to gather intelligence about piracy in the Reach. If the Travellers have impressed Krond (or, perversely, if they have annoyed him), they are assigned to this duty. The Flotilla is short-staffed, so officers may be obliged to take part in missions they are not ideally suited for (i.e. a gunnery officer might be issued a boarding vacc suit and told to report for a boarding action).

Krond is not satisfied with merely arresting and airlocking pirates – to solidify his reputation and position at court, he needs an epic victory. There are wild tales and rumours about a 'pirate planet', a system that does not merely tolerate pirates, but actively supplies and outfits them. Some call this planet Theev, others Outrimer, others the Dark Planet. Persistent rumours connect this pirate kingdom to the old Empire of Sindal. Krond's grand design is to find this planet and blast it from orbit.

And if doing so takes the lives of half the crew in the 198th Punitive Flotilla, so be it!

GATHERING RUMOURS

The Travellers are issued with a captured pirate ship, a 200-ton Far Trader with two double turrets (missile rack/sandcaster and twin pulse lasers) named the *Dirty Beast* and sent to gather intelligence about pirate strongholds in the Borderlands subsector. This will be a three-month tour of duty, starting at Byrni. That is time to make up to six two-parsec jumps, enough to get the Travellers to worlds like Acrid or Argona. Krond issues the Travellers with MCr2 for expenses and to purchase supplies for the flotilla. Specifically, the flotilla needs Polymers, Advanced Machine Parts, Advanced Weapons and Vehicles and Luxury Consumables. Failure to return with a cargo hold full of such goods is not acceptable.

At each world, ask the Travellers how they intend to gather rumours and intelligence about piracy. They might hang around starport bars with Carouse, cultivate underworld contacts using Streetwise, capture some pirates and interrogate them with Persuade, hack into planetary networks with Electronics (computers) or pursue whatever other tactic they wish.

Next, the Travellers make the appropriate check. Each attempt to find information takes 1D days. Compare the Effect of the check on the Pirate Information table.

Identifying the Pirate World

There are two leading candidates for Krond's target – Drinax and Theev. Other potential target worlds include Oghma (Sindal/0410), Tyr (Dpres/0608) or Wildeman (Tobia/0400). Each planet has a Suspicion Rating, which starts at 3, with the exception of Drinax, which starts at a value dependent on the Pirate Travellers Imperial Standing.

- -6 if the Pirate Travellers are an Ally of the Imperium (Imperial Standing of 21+)
- -3 if the Pirate Travellers are Tolerated by the Imperium (Imperial Standing of 6+)
- 0 if the Pirate Travellers are Ignored by the Imperium (Imperial Standing of 5 to -5)
- 3 if the Pirate Travellers are an Irritant to the Imperium (Imperial Standing of -6 or more)
- 6 if the Pirate Travellers are Infamous in the Imperium (Imperial Standing of -21 or more)
- 9 if the Pirate Travellers are an Enemy of the Imperium (Imperial Standing of -40 or more)

The world with the highest Suspicion Rating after this section gets targeted for the Planetary Assault.

The referee should inform the Travellers of the existence of Suspicion Ratings, and even display the current scores visibly. However, the purpose of them remains obscure until the Pirate Travellers receive *The Letter* (page 164) or the Planetary Assault begins.

Drinax? Who Cares!

If the Travellers have adopted a different system as their primary base of operations, then move Drinax to the list of secondary targets, and put the Travellers' base in Drinax's original place.

Pirate Information

Effect	Information Gleaned
-6 or less	The Traveller runs into big trouble (a pirate band or criminal syndicate, an Aslan *ihatei* raid)
-2 to -5	The Traveller learns a **Wild Rumour.** Roll on the Rumours of the Reach table on page 6.
-1	The Traveller learns one **Accurate Rumour** if he pays the cost (a bribe, a favour) or overcomes some added danger (a mugging, dealing with loan sharks, a run-in with local authorities).
0	The Traveller learns one **Accurate Rumour.**
1-5	The Traveller learns D3 **Accurate Rumours.**
6 or more	The Traveller learns D3+1 **Accurate Rumours** and is pointed to another world where they can gain more information (DM+2 to next attempt to find information)

Accurate Rumours are relatively accurate information about piracy in the Reach. They fall into six categories – roll 1D to determine the type of rumour.

1. Rumours about pirate bases, refuelling points, and worlds that are Tolerant of Piracy.
2. Recent events in the Reach (such as the results of recent adventures in the campaign).
3. Information about specific pirate bands, including the Pirate Travellers. Remember to include amusing or exaggerated accounts of past events in the campaign!
4. Information about one of the other candidate worlds. Raise the Suspicion Rating of the following world by +1. Roll 1D. 1-2: Oghma; 3-4: Tyr, 5: Wildeman, 6: Any other world of the referee's choice.
5. Information about Theev. Raise the Suspicion Rating of Theev by +1.
6. Information about Drinax's sponsorship of piracy. Raise the Suspicion Rating of Drinax by +1.

Getting into Trouble: Optionally, the Navy Travellers can become involved in random encounters or patron missions on any world they visit.

Reporting Back: If the Travellers have not gathered at least 15 Accurate Rumours during their expedition, Krond is extremely displeased. If they gather more than 30, or if a world now has a Suspicion Rating of 10+, he promotes them all one rank on the spot.

THE FIX

On returning to the flotilla, the Travellers are given two weeks leave on Byrni. Fixer Brell, however, has other ideas for their free time. He tells them that the Flotilla is running low on many key components. He wants the Travellers to take the *Dirty Beast* to Paal (Tliowaha/0805) to purchase Basic Consumables and Uncommon Raw Materials. To pay for these goods, he has 'borrowed' some weapons from the *Eurisko's* armoury – ten tons of Illegal Weapons! He wants the Travellers to smuggle the weapons onto Paal and buy the supplies Fixer needs. He promises them a cut of the profits…

GROWING DISSENT

The mood on the flotilla is strained when the Travellers return. While navy personnel are used to hardship and long tours of duty, especially in the Reach, the stress of pirate hunting and lack of leadership from Krond or the Old Woman has eroded morale to dangerously low levels.

The arrival of a supply convoy from Tobia does temporarily lift spirits, though. The convoy brings spare parts, consumable supplies, and news from the Imperium. All hands are called down to help transfer the supplies onto the *Eurisko*, and a curious thing occurs when one or more of the Travellers is present.

An over-eager crewman fumbles one crate of luxuries meant for Krond and his circle of friends. The crate tumbles lazily across the weightless cargo bay and bounces off a bulkhead. It pops open, revealing a secret compartment beneath the lid. Inside are a dozen phials of an unfamiliar pharmaceutical. If the Travellers analyse this substance, they discover it is a Psi-Drug (see the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, page 203).

Someone in Krond's circle is a psion…

Your Traveller Wouldn't Know That!

The Navy Travellers have no knowledge of the activities of the Pirate Travellers or the Kingdom of Drinax's schemes to establish a new empire. If a Traveller acts with out-of-character knowledge, ask them to justify their actions. Why, for example, did you suggest checking out Drinax over all the other worlds in the Reach? If the Traveller can come up with a plausible excuse, run with it. If the Traveller says 'it's just a hunch' or 'I have a feeling', then run with that too – the Travellers has latent psionic abilities. Over the next 1D weeks, the Travellers has more precognitive flashes, including visions of his own death from a massive brain bleed. Unless the Traveller finds a Psionic Institute and remains there for training, he dies horribly as his brain overheats and boils within his skull.

THE RED ZONE

When they return to duty, the Travellers are sent pirate hunting on board the *Morlunn Lake*, one of the six *Gazelle*-class Close Escorts. Her regular crew were injured when a pirate rammed her. Instead of a Launch, she carries two 10-ton Light Fighters, one of which is piloted by Rhoda 'Red' Voidborn. They are to engage in a patrol of the worlds of Sink, Fantasy, Burgess, then return via Vorito and the World – a total of 6 jumps, or nearly three months.

In the Fantasy system, the Travellers detect two known pirate ships – a 300-ton Pirate Carrier named the *Skull* and an armed Far Trader (two triple turrets with pulse lasers and missile racks) called the *Happy Accident*. The pirates were refuelling by melting an icy asteroid down and cracking the water for hydrogen, and attempt to warn the Travellers off; they do not want a fight, but will give one if they have to. The carrier's fuel tanks are full, but the *Happy Accident* has only half-full tanks.

When the carrier sustains more than 40 points of damage or loses more than three fighters, it tries to flee, recalling its fighters and preparing to jump to a secret outpost in The World system. Red recognises the flying style of one of the fighters – it is her older sister Una! Just before the carrier jumps, Red flies her fighter right up to the *Skull*, so close that she is inside the jump bubble when it forms. Carrier and fighter vanish.

If the Travellers cripple the *Happy Accident*, they can interrogate its crew. The captain is a Vargr who gives her name as Yowler. Under interrogation, she reveals the existence of a small pirate outpost in The World.

Rescuing Red: The Travellers can return to Byrni and the Punitive Flotilla with the location of this base, or follow the *Skull* to The World and attempt to rescue Red.

The Pirate Base: The base in The World is a hollow asteroid. Calling it a pirate base is a misnomer – it is a waystation, a refuelling point for raiders, traders and refugees, with an internal biosphere built by biological engineers from Burgess. It is unarmed, but at any time there are 1D+1 small ships docked here, some of which have engaged in piracy in the past. The base has a population of 100 + 2D per ship docked. The ruler of the base is an eccentric computer system that claims to be a renegade AI from the Strend Cluster, named Minister. If you believe Minister, it was on a long-range automated probe launched in search of Ancient sites; it crashed into an asteroid and built the base around itself centuries ago. The locals ignore Minister's ramblings, but take advantage of its technical skills.

Red's older sister and family live here. If the Travellers follow her here, Red asks them to help conceal the existence of the base from the Punitive Flotilla; failing that, she asks for their help in smuggling her sister and nephews to safety.

ASTEROID ASSAULT

If Krond learns of the existence of the asteroid base, he sends the *Gorluun* (or the *Eurisko*) together with the *Storm of Arrows* and three *Gazelles* to destroy it. His plan is simple – the battleship rains down hell from its missile bays (or its spinal cannon) to 'shake' the asteroid, while the Gazelles, fighters and marines capture any fleeing or surrendering pirates. Then the base is destroyed by another barrage, killing anyone who tries hiding in the deeper caverns.

The Travellers might participate in the storming of the base, or chase down fleeing ships. If Red is on the base, she tries to sneak her sister and family out on a scout ship; the Travellers may choose to let her go, or follow Krond's orders and treat her as a pirate.

A VERDICT OF ACCIDENTAL DEATH

When the Travellers return to the *Eurisko*, the Old Woman contacts whichever Traveller has the closest relationship with her, asking them to meet with her privately. En route to her quarters, the Traveller passes Ogleby, Krond's servant, who sneers at him.

The Traveller discovers the Old Woman dead in her quarters. Her body is still warm, and there are no signs of injuries. An autopsy will conclude she died of a sudden stroke; a Traveller with Medic 3+ or Science (psionicology) 1+ knows that damage from telepathic assaults often looks like a stroke. On the captain's desk is a copy of an Imperial Intelligence report detailing Aslan activity in the Trojan Reach. The report stresses the importance of not provoking the Aslan Hierate with an excessive Imperial military presence, as it could unify the warring clans by providing them with a common enemy. The Old Woman intended to use the report to convince her superiors that Krond had put the flotilla at risk by remaining at Byrni instead of following the usual 'sweep through and return home' pattern of previous punitive flotillas.

THE FUNERAL

At the Captain's funeral, Krond pays tribute to Lenat's leadership and heroism, but also takes the opportunity to rally the fleet to his plan.

'We have waited here on Byrni because I intend to be thorough. We have waited here on Byrni because I intend to be sure. We have waited here on Byrni because I intend to find the Pirate's World and destroy it once and for all – and I tell you, I have found it!

'And now, in Lenat's name and in Lenat's memory, the Eurisko will burn that world to cinders!'

Mutiny! Assassination!

While the crew do not like Krond and loved the Old Woman, the Travellers are unlikely to be able to start a mutiny – or certainly not a *successful* mutiny. Murdering Krond is more plausible, but that puts command of the flotilla into the hands of Commander Steyland, who will follow Krond's last orders until they are countermanded. Any such skullduggery on the part of the Navy Travellers should ultimately result in them being forced to flee the ship and turn pirate.

5. SUN & SHADOW

With Imperial Patrols passing through the Drinax system, pirates getting arrested on a daily basis, and a trigger-happy admiral with a 75,000-ton warship sitting four parsecs away from the Floating Palace, King Oleb is understandably nervous about the future of his scheme. How do the Travellers ensure Drinax is spared?

THE LETTER

Through covert channels (like the merchant Rachando, or their own informants), the Travellers meet a scoundrel called Lang Fossa, who has a proposition for them. Fossa recently came into possession of a very interesting document, one he will sell to them for a mere Cr50000. It is a letter from Krond to Eridani (see page 164, also downloadable from Mongoose Publishing's web site).

From the letter, it is clear Krond intends to stay in the Reach until he has found and destroyed his 'pirate world'. The letter also hints at several countermeasures the Travellers could take to defeat or delay Krond's plans.

- They could rescue the captured pirates – see *In Chains*, page 165.
- They could intercept and kidnap Eridani – see *The Duke's Niece*, page 167.
- They could try various tactics to make Krond's position untenable – see *Ending the Game*, page 170.

First, though, they need to ensure the hammer does not fall on Drinax by deflecting suspicion away from their base.

DEFLECTING SUSPICION

In effect, the Pirate Travellers must do the opposite of what the Navy Travellers were doing – instead of gathering intelligence and searching for clues about piracy, they need to start hiding their tracks and spreading false rumours. How the Travellers accomplish this is up to them. They might:

- Find Imperial spies and informants and bribe them, or give them false leads.
- Have their allied governments and friends mislead the Imperium.
- Plant evidence 'proving' the pirates did not come from Drinax.
- Prey on ships coming from Drinax.
- Offer gifts and tokens of appreciation to the pirate hunters for 'saving' Drinax from the scourge of pirates.
- Sneak onto the *Eurisko* and alter the computer records.
- Mount 'false flag' attacks – launch a series of raids, and broadcast a false identity loudly to everyone in the system.

For each of these schemes, the referee should assign a suitable check or task chain. For example, misleading an Imperial spy might involve a task chain using Investigate to identify the spy, then Deception to lie to him. Convincing the government of Torpol to lie to the Imperium might require Diplomat; planting false computer files might involve Electronics (computers). These tasks take, on average, 1D weeks to take effect, and reduce the Suspicion Rating of Drinax by the Effect of the check.

Note that while the Travellers flit about the Reach, they still need to dodge imperial patrols and spies as described in Pirate Hunters (page 21).

MOVING THE CROSSHAIRS

Each time the Travellers deflect suspicion, they must choose whether to simply make Drinax less suspicious (reducing that system's Suspicion Rating) or to deflect it onto another world. They could, for example, arrange events to make it look like raiders from Theev are responsible for all the pirate attacks. Doing so raises the target world's Suspicion Rating by an equal amount.

If the Travellers try to deflect suspicion onto an obviously improbable world – say, a TL1 wasteland – then the Suspicion Rating is raised by only half the Effect.

The Travellers can deflect suspicion onto the Aslan Hierate. Even Krond is not going to start a punitive war with an entire star empire.

Guess Who's Coming to Drinax

Drinax is one of the more visible worlds in this part of Charted Space. The wonders of the eccentric Floating Palace are well known and there is an Imperial ambassador at King Oleb's court. At some point, Krond and his courtiers simply *have* to pay a visit to the Floating Palace.

You can run this encounter with either group of Travellers – the Navy Travellers can tag along as bodyguards and escorts, or the Pirate Travellers can be introduced as 'courtiers'. The Travellers might use the dinner as cover to investigate Drinax for signs of piracy, deflect suspicion, or launch some crazed scheme like trying to kidnap, assassinate, or mind-control Krond.

KROND'S LETTER

My dear Eridani,

I write this letter in my quarters, illuminated by the light from a dozen pirate ships that burn like torches. The litany of my victories here is already too long to recite, and it will not be long before I return to your uncle's court to be acclaimed the Victor of the Outrim Void – and on that day, none shall gainsay our marriage. 'When!' I hear you ask as if you were here in the room with me, our souls entwined across the parsecs. When? When I find the fabled Pirate's World, that secret stronghold of villainy, and when I blast it to cinders, thus putting an end to piracy amid the stars forever!

I pray you, go to the world of Ilgan, and look upon the prison camps. See the vile rogues and scoundrels who daily preyed upon the poor innocents, until I put an end to their murderous ways. Then, if your courage holds, jump further rimward and join me here on Byrni. My friends and I yearn for news from home, not to mention the comforts and provisions we were accustomed to on Tobia. Supplies run thin. Erick demands Tobian brandy, Vasher wants cigars, and why, I think even dour Ogleby would be cheered by some wine from home. For myself, all I desire is you.

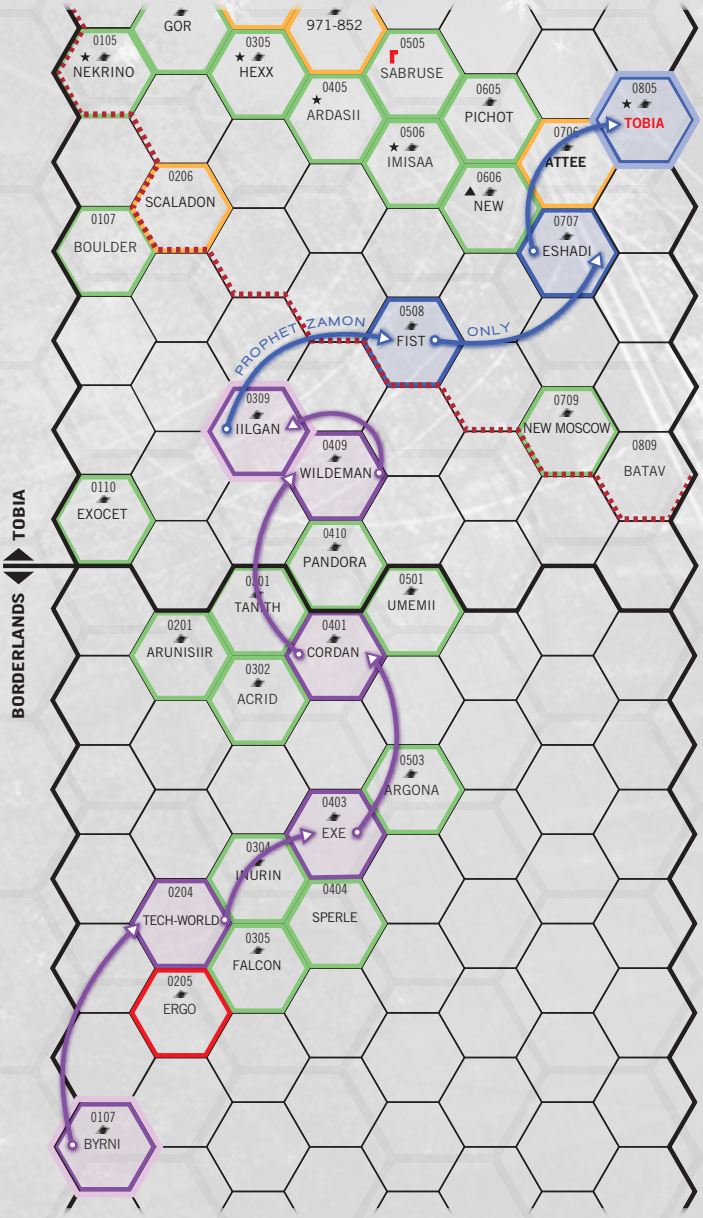
Victory will come soon but not, I think, soon enough to soothe my aching soul. Rest assured that I strive daily to find the Pirate's World, and when I do, why, it shall be the pyre that lights your route to me!

A thousand adorations,

Krond

6. IN CHAINS

Over the course of the Punitive Flotilla's operations, Krond's force arrest dozens of pirates, adventurers, thieves and scavengers. These reprobates get thrown in the *Petal* prison hulk. Their ships – if they can be captured intact or at least taken whole – get thrown into the cavernous cargo hold of the *Prophet Zamon*. Krond intends to return to Tobia with a truly impressive monument to his own heroism in the form of a few thousand tons of pirate ship and a few hundred chained prisoners.



Of course, if the Pirate Travellers could break those prisoners out, then they would have hundreds of pirates who owed them a big favour.

MOVING THE PRISONERS

Six months after establishing a base at Byrni, the flotilla's supplies run dangerously low. Krond therefore decides to send the *Petal* and *Prophet Zamon* back to the Imperium, escorted by two of his Gazelles. The four ships are to link up with an Imperial trading convoy at Tech-World, then travel from there to Exe, Cordan, and into Tobia subsector at Wildeman – and then they are to detour to the independent world of Iilgan, where the *Zamon* drops the wrecked ships in orbit and the pirates are interned in a special camp built in the wilderness. The *Petal* is then to wait while the *Zamon* restocks at Tobia, then they return to Byrni to fill up on more prisoners and wrecks, respectively.

If the Pirate Travellers keep watch on the flotilla, they can anticipate this movement and intercept the ships en route to Iilgan. Alternatively, they can follow them all the way to Iilgan, then break the prisoners out of the camp there.

THE PRISON HULK *PETAL*

The *Petal* is almost unarmed (three double turrets with twin pulse lasers). She has a crew of nine, plus some thirty Imperial Marines as guards for the prisoners crammed into her stripped-down staterooms. The *Petal* was supposed to be able to handle around two hundred guests in her role as a hotel, but as a hulk, the wardens will cheerfully cram in far more prisoners, even though the air becomes hot, stale and mildly poisonous.

The prisoners are kept locked in their staterooms except at mealtimes. Key prisoners, or dangerous ones, are chained. The whole prisoner deck is rigged with anaesthetic gas dispensers. Individual staterooms or the whole deck can be flooded with knock-out gas at the touch of a button, and the marines always wear rebreathers when on duty.

THE PROPHET ZAMON

Zamon is a standard megafreighter – her crew section sits like a little bubble atop gargantuan fuel tanks, titanic jump drives, and a mountain of 2,000-dton cargo containers. She has a crew of 40, plus another dozen marines. All the captured pirate ships are kept in support webs inside cargo containers; freeing a ship takes thirty minutes per hundred tons of ship and n Athletics (dexterity) check, unless you are willing to try blasting it free, which inflicts 1D damage on the ship and 2D damage on any other ships in the container.

Pirate's Honour

If the Travellers successfully rescue the pirates, then one of the Travellers may make a Leadership check (SOC). A number of pirate bands equal to the Effect join the Travellers' fleet. The other pirates owe a considerable favour to the Travellers – they gain 1D Allies, 2D Contacts, and 4D Favours. A Favour may be cashed in for DM+2 to any check when interacting with a pirate in the Trojan Reach. Alternatively, 5 Favours may move a Tolerant or better port one step towards Haven.

For each pirate ship, roll two dice. On a 10+, the ship is ready to fly once freed from its webbing, with fuel tanks that are 1Dx10% full. On an 8 or 9, the ship can be repaired in a matter of hours, and again has tanks that are 1Dx10% full. On a 7 or less, the ship is wrecked and may never fly again, or at least requires months of repair work.

THE INTERNMENT CAMP

Iilgan is a peaceful agricultural planet. The camp is located in a savannah region near the equator. It consists of many rows of prefabricated shelters, with the guard building on the south side of the encampment (optionally, the referee may wish to use the prison from the previous *Traveller* edition, *Adventure 2: Prison Planet*, in which case move the camp to the tundras of Iilgan's south pole).

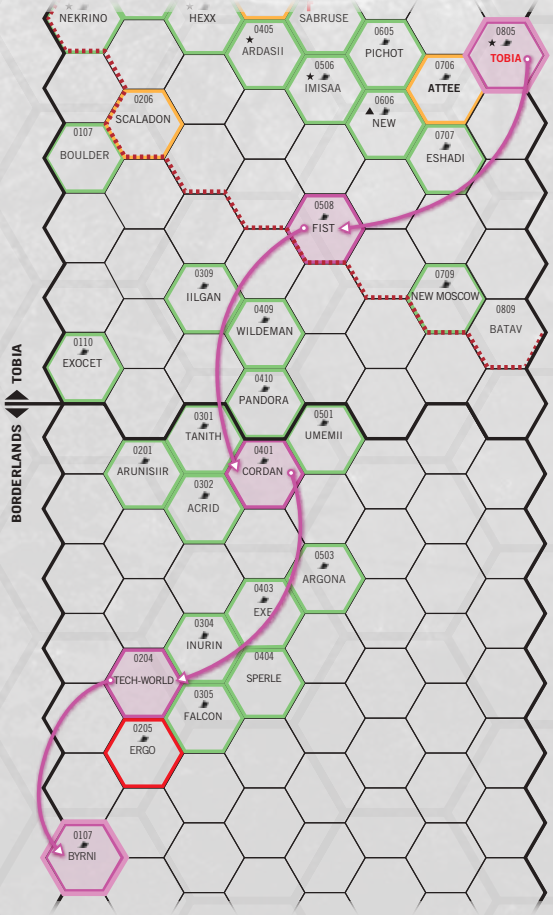
The camp is guarded by some forty local troops, armed with TL7 weapons. While the starport is on the far side of the planet, there is a smaller regional spaceport only a few kilometres away, where giant agricultural transports launch for orbit and the lucrative Imperial trade routes. The freed prisoners can steal a transport, head to orbit, and then reclaim any functional ships.

7. THE DUKE'S NIECE

Eridani, the young niece of the Duke of Tobia, is engaged to Vice-Admiral Krond. Theirs was a whirlwind romance and impetuous engagement. As a member of the ducal family, Eridani's hand in marriage is a significant asset, not to be squandered. While Krond's family are of good standing and considerable wealth, in political terms, it is far from an ideal match; Krond may be a dashing officer in the Tobia Planetary Guard, but planetary navies have little cachet outside their home systems. Eridani accepted his proposal out of a sense of excitement and adventure, and certainly Krond seemed much more interesting than some boring planetary baron or megacorporate executive. If Krond cannot solidify his reputation in the Reach, then the Duke may 'arrange' for the engagement to be cancelled. His tolerance for his niece's ill-considered romance only goes so far.

As described in Krond's letter, Eridani intends to secretly visit Byrni.

Behind the scenes, of course, the telepath Ogleby 'pushed' Eridani into accepting Krond's engagement. He also planted the seed of the idea that she should visit Byrni, so he can reinforce the telepathic conditioning. Krond has no idea just how much his lackey manipulates those around him with psionic powers.



ERIDANI'S ROUTE

Eridani and her retinue travel on board the *Sunrise*, a *Herald*-class Fast Messenger, refitted with luxuries and staterooms appropriate to a woman of her rank. *Herald*-class ships are sometimes seen in the Reach on safaris or tours heading to the Florian League. Another Close Escort, the *Leopold*, escorts the *Sunrise.* They follow the usual jump-4 trade route from Tobia (Fist>Cordan>Tech-World) before branching off for Byrni. They travel as part of a trade convoy as far as Cordan, but leave that system in haste before the other ships are ready to jump.

Eridani travels with four bodyguards (elite ex-marines in battle dress) as well as a few servants, all of whom are combat-trained. She is also accompanied by a TL15 android duplicate of herself. In addition, the ship has a single escape pod with an advanced stealth coating (DM-4 to detect the pod). If the ship is boarded, then Eridani flees to the pod and ejects, leaving her android counterpart to pretend to be her. The escape pod heads for the *Leopold*, if that ship is still flying; otherwise, it makes for the nearest habitable planet.

The android's programming is excellent; spotting that it is not actually Eridani requires an Investigate check (INT). Of course, a medical exam or densitometer scan would also instantly give the game away. The android is programmed to protect Eridani's life for as long as possible; if she is safe or it can no longer protect her, it switches to combat mode. The android can be reprogrammed if disabled; doing so is a Formidable (14+) Electronics (computers) check (1D hours, INT).

USING ERIDANI

Should the Travellers kidnap Eridani, they have several options:

- **Hold Her for Ransom**: They could ransom her to Krond for some of his prisoners, or to the Duke of Tobia (MCr100 is not unreasonable). Ransoming Eridani reduces their Imperial Standing by a further 2D.
- **Use Her as A Bargaining Chip**: Instead of a formal ransom, they can contact Krond and come to an arrangement. Krond's political support for his punitive fleet is dependent on his engagement to Eridani, just as he needs the Punitive Fleet to succeed to be able to marry her.
- **Convince Her to Stop Krond**: If the Travellers show her that Krond is mishandling the whole situation, attacking innocent worlds, committing atrocities and so on, they can convince her to use her influence to turn the flotilla around.
- **Break the Telepathic Conditioning**: Telepathically scanning Eridani or observing her may reveal her telepathic conditioning.
- **Convince Her to Turn Pirate**: This last option is unlikely but she does secretly long for adventure…

BODYGUARDS

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human			-	-
STR	10 (16)	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	10 (14)	EDU	7	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Gun Combat (energy) 3, Melee (unarmed) 2, Recon 2, Vacc Suit 3
END	9	SOC	6	
EQUIPMENT			Battle Dress (+25), PGMP-14 (1DD) or Laser Rifle (5D+3)	

ERIDANI

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human			Female	22
STR	7	INT	6	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	10	Carouse 1, Diplomat 1, Science (history) 1
END	9	SOC	14	
EQUIPMENT			-	

Note that any attack on Eridani reduces the Travellers' Imperial Standing by 3D.

ERIDANI ANDROID

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Android			-	-
TRAITS			Armour +6,	
STR	12	INT	4	SKILLS
DEX	9	EDU	6	Deception 2, Melee (unarmed) 4
END	15	SOC	-	
EQUIPMENT			Claws (1D+4), Self-Destruct (12D, Blast 3)	

8. PLANETARY ASSAULT

If the Hunting DM for the flotilla reaches +12, if the Suspicion Rating for a world hits 25, or at the referee's discretion, the planetary assault begins. The flotilla departs Byrni and heads straight for the target world, which is the system with the highest Suspicion Rating.

Once the flotilla arrives, the *Gorluun* and smaller ships engage the planetary defences, if any, while the *Eurisko* opens fire on the pirate port. Marines and landing craft swarm in to 'make arrests' and find proof of piracy, but Krond is more interested in making a big, dramatic blast than in actually capturing criminals.

THE TARGET WORLD

1. **Drinax:** The Floating Palace is a hard target to hit, but the *Eurisko* has plenty of firepower. If Drinax is hit, then this campaign is effectively over in its intended form. Some adventures may still be salvaged, but the annihilation of the Floating Palace kills key characters for the other adventures, along with the dream of a renewed Kingdom of Drinax.
2. **Theev:** Port Blacksand has plenty of ships, but none big enough to take on a warship. The Widows of Blacksand may be dangerous foes on the streets of that town, but all their cybernetic and genetic upgrades cannot stop ortillery. The only thing that might save Theev is if Failohk's company got hold of the weapons in *The Treasure of Sindal*. If they did, then at the height of the battle, an atomic planet-killer bomb explodes right on top of the *Eurisko*.
3. **Oghma:** Icy Oghma has only TL9 ships. The infamous slave-taking raiders possess insane courage, hurling their ships into the teeth of enemy fire, but they inflict only minor losses on the flotilla. On the cold wastes of the surface, though, it is a different story – the Oghman Clans are vicious fighters, and the Imperial forces must battle guerrilla attacks and snipers amid the blizzards.
4. **Tyr:** Tyr is already only a shadow of its former self. A few centuries ago, Tyr ruled a pocket empire of a dozen worlds, until it was shattered by Aslan mercenaries. The capital world, though, still has extensive automated satellite defences, making it a hard target for an understrength flotilla.
5. **Wildeman:** The asteroid miners of Wildeman know the system better than anyone, and their ships – while only TL12 on average – are still a cut above most civilian ships. They still lose, but manage to accelerate a rock into the prow of the *Gorluun*, destroying the whole ship in the process.

RUNNING THE PLANETARY ASSAULT

Focus on a smaller-scale engagement for the Travellers – they might be assigned to take out a particular defensive satellite, or pursue a specific suspected pirate. Making them part of the ground assault is ideal; have them hunt their target in the midst of ruined, burning buildings as missiles rain down from orbit.

If the Travellers have clashed with Krond or Ogleby, then they are deliberately assigned a suicide mission. Having the Navy Travellers die in the line of duty might be a suitable conclusion to that side of the narrative, if they do not choose to turn pirate.

AFTERMATH

If one of the minor targets (Tyr, Wildeman or Oghma) is destroyed, then the campaign is largely unaffected.

The discovery and destruction of the pirate stronghold of Theev may be a boon for the Pirate Travellers. Theev was the primary repair yard and market for stolen goods in the whole Trojan Reach. Drinax could easily step into this role. Note, however, that Theev is secretly backed by the General Development Company, who will not take kindly to the destruction of a major investment. Furthermore, if the Travellers' involvement in the destruction of Theev is ever revealed, their reputations in the underworld of the Reach will be ruined.

If Drinax is destroyed, then the campaign is effectively over.

9. ENDING THE GAME

Some possibilities for the end of the 198th Punitive Flotilla are outlined above – the Pirate Travellers kidnap Eridani, or the flotilla bombs a target world before leaving the Reach. However, there are ways that a proactive band of Travellers could hasten Krond's defeat.

ATTACK LINES OF SUPPLY

The flotilla needs around MCr8 worth of supplies every month. Some of these can be obtained from Byrni and other nearby systems, but others have to be shipped from Tobia. The Pirate Travellers cannot take on warships, but can blow up freighters and cargo haulers en route to Byrni, as well as use their networks of contacts and friendly governments to cut off local sources of spare parts and consumables. Attacking the supply lines forces Krond to allocate more and more of his ships to defending his freighters, and less to hunting pirates. If the Travellers can pull off a big heist – say, by crippling the *Zomon* as it returns from Tobia – then the flotilla will be forced into ignominious retreat.

THE TREASURE OF SINDAL

If the Travellers found the Treasure of Sindal, they could use the weapons on the flotilla. Smuggling a nuclear weapon onto the *Eurisko* would be challenging in the extreme, but could destroy the warship if successful. Alternatively, they could drop a virus bomb on Byrni, which would also infect the fleet. Using weapons of mass destruction like this is an atrocity, reducing Imperial Standing by 4D.

POLITICAL PRESSURE

As Captain Lenat pointed out, one of the reasons that past punitive flotillas have just swept through the Reach and returned home was to avoid the impression of a military build-up on the border with the notoriously touchy Aslan. If the Travellers were to make contact with an Aslan noble, and draw the attention of the Hierate to the growing Imperial presence only four parsecs away from the key trade world of Tyokh, they could spark a confrontation. The Pirate Travellers might not be able to go toe-to-toe with the *Eurisko*, but the Aslan have plenty of capital ships of their own…

C H A P T E R - T E N

THE VORITO GAMBIT

'Imperial assent and licence to be granted unto them, that they, at their own adventures, costs, and charges, as well for the honour of this Third Imperium of Humaniti, as for the increase of our navigation, and advancement of trade of merchandise, within our said realms and the dominions of the same, might adventure and set forth one or more voyages, with convenient number of ships and pinnaces, by way of traffic and merchandise to the Outrim Void, in the Trojan Reach and subsectors adjacent and to as many of the worlds, moons and ports, asteroids and other places, thereabouts, as where trade and traffic may by all likelihood be discovered, established or had; divers of which systems, and many of the worlds, moons and ports, thereof, have long since been discovered by others of our subjects, albeit not frequented in trade of merchandise.'

- Charter Document of the General Development Company

This adventure takes place throughout the Trojan Reach sector and can begin in any system in Tliowaha or an adjacent subsector.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The Travellers have a stroke of luck – they capture a courier vessel intact. On board are documents implicating the General Development Company in a grand scheme to fortify the Trojan Reach against takeover by the Aslan. According to these documents, the company has agents and informants in dozens of systems – including Drinax! The merchant Rachondo is their spy in the court of King Oleb.

The Travellers must then choose how to confront Rachando – and save him from assassins apparently dispatched by GeDeCo to eliminate him. Under the right pressure, he crumbles and reveals that the sector headquarters of GeDeCo on the nearby world of Vorito contains a secret vault, and in that vault is treasure beyond compare.

Next comes the heist – even with Rachando's complicity, breaking into the secret vault will not be easy. They have to use the opening ceremony for GeDeCo's new starport at Vorito as cover to sneak in.

After entering the secret vault and bypassing its defences, they encounter a holographic representation of a scientist named Dr. Gaemal Jaskarl, a psychohistorian and architect of GeDeCo's secret conspiracy in the Reach. The hologram explains the Travellers match a psychohistorical profile that makes them perfect for his plans – he is willing to put GeDeCo's resources behind them, if they agree to let Drinax fall when the time comes.

Can the Travellers escape the web of fate woven by GeDoCo?

GeDeCo

1. THE GENERAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

The General Development Company, popularly referred to by the staccato contraction GeDeCo, was founded more than four hundred years ago, in the Year 700, by investors and nobles in the Domain of Deneb. Its mission, as the name suggests, was to be a long-term investment vehicle, a company that would help struggling worlds develop and become productive trade partners. GeDeCo has always looked towards the long term – you invest your MegaCredits now, and your great-great-grandchildren reap the rewards. The company's headquarters and chief investors remain as they always have in Deneb Sector, but the corporation focussed its effort on building up the chaotic Trojan Reach.

From the beginning, GeDeCo offered what amounted to a Faustian bargain to its client worlds. Say you are a primitive TL6 warlord on some wartorn rock in the Reach. You rule one of several nations on your balkanised planet. You know there are other planets out there, but you have little conception of the scale of the Imperium or the Hierate compared to other local powers – after all, your only contacts with the stars are infrequent visits by battered tramp traders, or raids by marginally more advanced neighbouring worlds.

Then a new ship arrives, a *new* ship, not one that has been patched together for centuries. The newcomers bow to you, and say that your civilisation has been *pre-approved* for a General Development Type I contract. They will put the might of GeDeCo behind you – give you weapons and training to unify your world, build a new starport to attract traders, and instruct your technicians and scientists on new technologies to lift you into the modern era. In return, they ask only for a small share in the prosperity to come, a voice in your court, and a few minor monopolies on certain imports and exports.

Within a year, you are the king of the world.

Within five, you realise that everything you have built relies on GeDeCo's support, and when they ask you for another little favour, another minor monopoly, you cannot refuse. You are a king – and kings are just one more thing that GeDeCo produces on an industrial scale.

THE JASKARL REPORT

In 841, GeDeCo established a district headquarters at Vorito, in Tliowaha sector. While GeDeCo had no direct involvement in trade with the Aslan Hierate, they had development contracts with more than 70% of the worlds on or near the trade route, so monitoring Aslan trade was a concern of theirs. In 843, the manager of that district headquarters hired a scientist to compile a report on how trade patterns were likely to develop in the coming decades.

That scientist was Gaemal Jaskarl.

Jaskarl is one of the galaxy's greatest experts in the field of psychohistory, the mathematical modelling of large populations and forces to predict future events. Psychohistory was partially discredited in the 800s after the psionics suppressions, but the Jaskarl scandal didn't help either. Jaskarl was found to have experimented on primitive societies on isolated Red Zone worlds, even introducing plagues to study how a civilisation reacts to catastrophes. He fled into the Reach to avoid arrest by the Imperial authorities.

He spent ten years travelling the Trojan Reach on a *Leviathan*-class trade ship, gathering data and modelling the sector in his psycho-historical mathematics, and then submitted what became known as the Jaskarl Report. The first section of the report consisted of some nine hundred pages of densely packed psychohistorical calculations, and a one-page summary in plain Galanglic.

The summary of the summary:

'You are screwed. The Aslan are inevitably going to eat the Reach for lunch, and there is a high probability that they will go far enough to take Corridor sector and cut the Domain of Deneb off entirely, as their attack will likely coincide with some other Imperial crisis like a civil war. All your work building up the economy of the Reach just makes the worlds more attractive to conquest.'

The second part of the report consisted of more than twenty thousand pages of mathematical symbols, and there was no plain summary. Jaskarl translated that part in person. He outlined a scheme, or rather a complex, branching set of probable schemes, that would turn the Trojan Reach into a tiger trap for the Aslan. It would turn some worlds into fortresses, others into xenophobes or conquerors. It would manipulate both the Imperium

and Hierate into investing in trade, while also promoting mistrust and militarisation of the border. It would cost the lives of millions – but it gave the best possible chance of stalling an Aslan advance within the next millennium.

The Trojan Reach branch of GeDeCo became the tool of a grand conspiracy to remake the sector. Only a small fraction of the corporation is part of this conspiracy; they are a secret society within the GeDeCo, like an apocalyptic cult that worships the mathematics of the Jaskarl Report. The Head Office in Deneb has no idea that the Vorito branch has gone rogue in a way that is both spectacular and invisible, although their accountants grumble about the number of strange investments and unexplained losses reported by Vorito.

In addition to developing low-tech worlds, Jaskarl's plan called for other interventions. GeDeCo secretly sponsored the planet of Theev to support piracy in the Reach (thus forcing the Imperium and Hierate to invest more military resources to protect shipping); they founded the renegade transhumanists of Tech-World (with the ultimate goal of producing superweapons); they engineered amphibians on Thalassa and secretly supply technology to the crazed priests of Tlazotleotl.

RECENT EVENTS

The corporation deemed Jaskarl valuable enough to warrant prolonging his life, though he is little more than a brain in a jar these days, his withered organs replaced by cybernetic parts or pumped full of anagathics. Jaskarl continued to refine his plan and develop a psychohistorical model that could perfectly predict the Aslan; he departed the Reach thirty years ago to study with the Hivers, the acknowledged masters of manipulation.

In 1098, mysterious saboteurs attacked the GeDeCo's headquarters on Vorito, destroying the planet's Class A Highport with a fusion bomb while other assassins murdered key GeDeCo executives. Everyone assumed that one of the Aslan clans were responsible – the clans may not know about the secret conspiracy, but they recognise GeDeCo is a threat to their expansionist goals. In fact, the attacks on GeDeCo were orchestrated by GeDeCo – the loss of the Highport was a necessary sacrifice according to the ineluctable mathematics of the Jaskarl Report, and the murdered executives were replaced by loyal members of the conspiracy.

Now, in 1105, the Jaskarl Report predicts the rise of a new power in the Reach. That power must be co-opted to serve the plan. The mathematics admit no other options.

SOUR JUMP

A tradition dating back to the first Solomani explorers is the belief in the 'sour jump'. Sometimes (or so it is said) a ship runs into a wavefront of concentrated bad luck in jump space (bad luck is, as everyone knows, a psionic phenomenon). If a jump goes sour, then everything the ship and her crew does when they arrive will go disastrously wrong. Perishable cargoes go off, buyers suddenly cancel the deal, the refined fuel is full of sludge, and the starport bar is full of ugly belters instead of pretty groupies. The only cure for a sour jump is to jump again and try to shake the bad luck off.

The Far Trader that just jumped in near the Travellers' ship is having one hell of a sour jump. Not only did it arrive within spitting distance of the Travellers' *Harrier* (or whatever they are flying at this stage in your campaign), it has jumped in well outside the hundred-diameter limit, meaning it has a long flight ahead of it before it can land and refuel. From the way she turns and accelerates, the Travellers can tell that the Trader has a full cargo bay – a very juicy prize for a pirate.

The Far Trader is the *Exalted Spirit*, a rustbucket that has been knocking around the Trojan Reach for centuries. She is a familiar sight in half the worlds on the Dustbelt. Her current captain is Fria Belsen, who inherited the ship when she shot the previous captain over a game of cards. She has a crew of five – three humans, a Vargr, and an old robot of uncertain provenance that also came with the ship. To keep the *Exalted Spirit* flying, Belsen signed on with GeDeCo. She makes supply runs from Vorito to various client planets throughout the sector, carrying advanced machine parts and other high-tech goods. She also picks up encoded reports transmitted by GeDeCo agents and spies; these are automatically received and stored on a data drum hidden in the *Exalted Spirit's* smuggling compartment. Belsen never needs to know who the GeDeCo agents are on each world – she jumps in, the black box reports that it has received a status report from someone in the system, and she knows she is clear to jump out again.

As the *Exalted Spirit* turns (presumably to flee the Travellers – see the *Alternate Hooks* sidebar if they are not bloodthirsty enough), one of her hull panels cracks. It is only a microfracture, but enough to start leaking atmosphere. Unfortunately for the *Exalted Spirit*, the law of the sour jump means the panel is the one over the smuggling compartment. She is leaking air from what should be part of her fuel tank according to the schematics of a standard ship of that class. That should be enough to tell the Travellers there is something interesting about this ship.

2. CAPTURING THE *EXALTED SPIRIT*

Belsen has dealt with pirates before, and knows her ship is no match for a determined cutthroat. As soon as the Travellers start shooting, she offers to dump a portion of her cargo as a bribe. If that fails, she tries fighting back in hopes of convincing the attackers the bribe is an easier option; should the Travellers keep attacking, then she surrenders once the *Exalted Spirit* sustains 20 points of damage or a critical hit.

The *Exalted Spirit* has two double beam laser turrets.

On board, the Travellers discover a cargo of 40 tons of Advanced Machine Parts, 10 tons of Advanced Electronics, and 10 tons of Robotics, for a total value of MCr8 (of course, the fence will take most of that, but it is still a valuable prize).

They can find the hidden smuggling compartment with any suitable skill – Investigate to search the ship, Engineer to compare the schematics to the air leak seen from outside, Electronics (comms) to trace the connections between the drum and the ship's communications systems, Electronics (sensors) to closely probe the structure, Persuade to intimidate or convince the crew to give up the compartment. Inside is a cache of gemstones worth MCr2 (Fria's emergency fund) and the data drum.

If questioned, Fria admits she is on contract to GeDeCo, and that they installed the data drum.

THE DATA DRUM

The data drum is a cylinder of TL14 electronics the size of an oil drum, similar to the mail containers used to transfer non-critical data between systems in the Imperium. An Easy (4+) Electronics (comms or computers) check (1D minutes, EDU) reveals the drum is programmed to tap into the ship's communication system after each jump, and listen for a radio message containing a particular code. It then records whatever data follows the code, before signalling to the ship's bridge that a message has been received.

Breaking into the actual data stored in the drum is exceedingly difficult, requiring a Formidable (14+) Electronics (computers) check (1D years, INT), and the drum is rigged to erase all its contents if it suspects someone is trying to hack into it. The Travellers might be able to get at it if they take it to Scholar Voha of the Scholar's Tower, but even then it would take months and they would owe him a huge favour.

However, they can get into the low-security communications database easily enough, which gives them a list of systems visited by the *Exalted Spirit* and a timestamp noting if and when the drum picked up one of the messages it is listening to. The *Exalted Spirit* has been around the sector over the years, and has picked up GeDeCo messages in dozens of systems.

One of them is Drinax. The *Exalted Spirit* has visited Drinax nine times in the last seven years, and there are seven time-stamped messages. On another world, that would not be enough to identify GeDeCo's spy, but the Floating Palace is a small place. Cross-referencing (possibly with an Investigate check) those visits with the movements of the handful of residents who regularly come and go from Drinax confirms there is only one possible suspect.

The merchant Rachando arrived on Drinax seven years ago. Every time both he and the *Exalted Spirit* have been in the same system, there is a timestamped message in the logs. The Travellers cannot read what Rachando sent to GeDeCo, but now have proof that he is their spy.

Alternate Hooks

If the Travellers do not bite at the dangled hook of the *Exalted Spirit*, here are some other ways to get them involved:

- If they have a pirate fleet, one of their other ships captures the *Exalted Spirit*, finds the data drum, and passes it onto them
- If the Travellers have a good reputation, then Fria Belsen decides to quit GeDeCo and sign on with them. As proof of her good faith, she offers them the data drum.
- An alien salvage trader offers the Travellers a curiosity – a data drum retrieved from the wreckage of the *Exalted Spirit*, a Far Trader. Decoding the data drum is beyond the trader's skills, but it is rumoured that the Travellers are closely associated with the fabled Scholar's Tower on Drinax. Perhaps they can make something of it.

FRIA BELSEN

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human			Female	34
STR	8	INT	9	SKILLS
DEX	9	EDU	7	Gun Combat (slug) 2, Gunner (turret) 2, Tactics (naval) 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Vacc Suit 1
END	6	SOC	4	
EQUIPMENT				Vacc Suit (+8), Shotgun (4D)

CREWMEN

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human			Male	26
STR	7	INT	6	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	6	Engineer 0, Gun Combat 0, Gunner (turret) 1, Mechanic 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 1
END	9	SOC	4	
EQUIPMENT				Vacc Suit (+8), Body Pistol (2D)

RUSTY THE ROBOT

HITS	SPEED	TL
18	5 m	12
SKILLS	Mechanic 2, Melee (unarmed) 2	
ATTACKS	Claws (3D)	
TRAITS	Armour (+3)	
PROGRAMMING	Advanced	

3. A TIME TO ROLL CAROUSE

The Travellers return to Drinax to find the courtiers of the Floating Palace enmeshed in a new intrigue. Two weeks before the Travellers arrived, a courier brought a message to King Oleb, inviting him or his representatives to attend a grand ball celebrating the opening of the new highport at Vorito.

Vorito – the headquarters of the General Development Company – is one of the wealthiest, most populous planets in the whole sector. Its highport was destroyed in a terrorist attack seven years ago, downgrading the planet from possessing a top-of-the-line Class A port to a paltry Class E, and virtually cutting the planet off from the rest of the galaxy. Now, after years of reconstruction, Vorito will soon once again be fully open for business. The ball is going to be the most prestigious social event of the year, attracting dignitaries from across the sector. Even the notoriously insular Floriani will be sending representatives.

The name of Drinax still carries a certain weight in the Reach. This is the last outpost of the old Sindalian Empire, after all. It would be unthinkable for Drinax not to send someone to the ball, especially as Vorito is a mere six parsecs away. King Oleb put the cat among the pigeons (or, as they say on Drinax, the pet hypertiger among the Hawk Warriors) by declaring that he does not want to attend the ball. Ever since the efforts of the Travellers brought Torpol back into Drinax's sphere of influence, the King has developed an obsession with Torpolian water polo, and they have nearly finished building his water polo field on the Underlinth of the Floating Palace. He is not going anywhere for the next month.

So, who will Drinax send? Potential candidates (all of whom are detailed in *The Trojan Reach* page 24) are as follows.

- **Princess Rao**: The ambitious princess is the architect of Drinax's resurgent glory. She is an able diplomat, and heir apparent to the Floating Palace, so she would be the obvious choice in normal circumstances. However, her brother and his supporters in court object, arguing that Prince Harrick is the eldest child and should represent Drinax. They also whisper that Rao delights in playing politics and intrigue too much, and her machinations risk annoying the powerful GeDeCo.
- **Prince Harrick**: King Oleb's oldest son was severely injured twenty years ago in an Aslan attack. It took the scientists of the Scholar's Tower that long to rebuild him – more than 90% of his body is cloned flesh or cybernetic replacement organs, but Scholar Voha insists that Harrick's brain was salvaged 'mostly' intact and unburned. Since his resurrection, the Prince has gathered allies in court, counterbalancing his sister's influence. The opening of the highport at Vorito is the perfect opportunity for Harrick to present himself to the dignitaries and politicians of the civilised parts of the Reach.

- **Lord Wrax**: The commander of Drinax's military forces (well, acknowledged military forces, not whatever fleet of cutthroats and thieves the Travellers have assembled thus far) might be a compromise candidate if the Floating Palace wants to show it is a strong military power. Lord Wrax thinks this is a good course of action – fly the flag, rattle a few sabres, and ensure Drinax is not targeted by raiders. Half the nobles attending the ceremony will be there solely to give the impression that their worlds have GeDeCo support and protection. Drinax is too proud to prostrate itself before a corporation, so needs a strong representative like Lord Wrax. Of course, Drinax is a high-tech joke in terms of force projection, with a space fleet composed mainly of TL15 yachts converted into fighting ships.
- **Lady Hil**: Lady Hil considers herself mistress of the court and arbiter of proper behaviour. She has more titles than there are systems in the sector, and woe betide anyone who fails to address her correctly. If Drinax wants to keep a low profile and reinforce its reputation as a flying asylum for inbred nobles of a dead empire, then they should send Lady Hil as their representative. Lady Hil has made it known that she would be willing to show the rest of the sector what true breeding and decorum look like.

While the Travellers have no official standing in the court of Drinax, everyone knows they have the king's ear. Their opinion carries weight. Therefore, Prince Harrick, Lord Wrax and Lady Hil all approach the Travellers for support. Each of them can offer a favour in exchange for this support.

- Prince Harrick recently accompanied the Vespexer tribes of Drinax's seared surface on a hunt. He discovered an underground structure still partially intact, and managed to salvage and repair a suit of TL15 battle dress dating back to the old Empire of Drinax. He will award this suit to the future Admiral of his Royal Fleet – in other words, the Traveller who gives Harrick the most support.
- Lord Wrax grudgingly admits that the Travellers may be Drinax's best chance for regaining something of its former glory. If they bury any old grudges by supporting him in court, he will put his best naval officers at their disposal (three Excellent-quality crewmen).
- Lady Hil will consider having sherry with the Travellers; in fact, she will let it be known she intends to have sherry with them. That is worth a permanent +1 increase to their SOC.

LOBBYING FOR A DELEGATE

King Oleb is all too happy to hand over yet more of his boring duties to the Travellers – first warfare, now petty court politics. He accepts whatever suggestion they make – if they want to tell Rao she cannot go and send someone else in her place, that is fine, they have his approval. Just wait until he is out playing inverted-gravity water polo before telling the Princess she cannot go to the ball.

If two or more Travellers disagree, they can both take their cases to the king making opposed Persuade checks (SOC).

Alternatively, the Travellers can put themselves forward for the post of Drinax's representative at Vorito.

THE CHOSEN DELEGATE

Note who is chosen as the delegate from Drinax; this dignitary is referred to in later scenes as the Delegate.

4. THE MERCHANT

Imagine a map that charts the flow of trade across the Trojan Reach. The blazing lights of the Imperium and Aslan Hierate dominate two opposing corners, where trillions of Credits worth of trades are done every day. The Florian League glows brightly too, its trade patterns strangely regular and predictable. The Glorious Empire, the Aslan splinter-state of slaver lords is like a dying ember – still hot and bright, but fading with every passing year. The Imperium-Hierate and Imperium-League trade routes are blazing trails across the stars, setting fire to every world they touch. Beyond those bands are patches of wealth, but there is little else in the sector. Vorito gleams with light reflected from the nearby trade route, the Strend cluster is surrounded by the weird infrared glow of high-tech smugglers, and the Senlis Foederate sheds enough light to at least be seen. There are few other trade routes of note in the sector.

Tramp traders, then, are the backbone of interstellar commerce in the Reach. These brave explorers, flying old Far Traders and similar ships, bounce from world to world picking up whatever cargo consignments or speculative trade is available. According to stories told in the Floating Palace, Rachando was once such a tramp trader, until he came to Drinax.

He was not the first trader to visit since the Aslan attack, but was the first to become staggeringly wealthy. According to the old charts, Drinax was a rich world, so previous traders brought luxuries and exotic delights and delicacies. Rachando brought basic goods – cheap foods, building materials, practical items like clothing. The Floating Palace had plenty of caviar and fine wine, jewelled gowns and ceremonial armour, but was desperately lacking in basic necessities. Even better, Rachando was willing to trade his supplies for antiques and treasures from the Floating Palace instead of demanding actual cash.

Today, Rachando's Bazaar fills two ballrooms next to the hangar where his Far Trader, the *Invisible Hand*, is docked. It is a bizarre market – here, you can trade jewels for bread, or gold plate for simple steel, and count yourself ahead on the deal.

INVESTIGATING RACHANDO

While the evidence from the GeDeCo computer records is damning, it is also circumstantial. The Travellers may suspect Rachando of being a GeDeCo spy, but may wish to gather proof before confronting him, especially as the merchant is one of the most powerful and influential people in the Floating Palace. Everyone from King Oleb down to the lowliest hydroponics farmhand owes Rachando innumerable favours (of course, since this is the Floating Palace, the lowliest hydroponics farmer is technically able to claim the title Grand Duke-Admiral of Goertel).

If the Travellers fail any one of the checks below, then not only do they fail to gather any useful information about Rachando, they also anger someone who owes him a favour.

- Failing one check just leads to social complications – someone complains about those dastardly pirates harassing that nice merchant Rachando.
- Failing two checks turns Drinax from a Haven to merely a Tolerant Port for the Travellers. Optionally, this can be a good trigger to start *The Assassins* (see page 180).
- Failing three or more checks turns Drinax to a Suspicious Port, and forces King Oleb to call the Travellers for a private hearing of their grievance against Rachando. If the Travellers are unable to convince Oleb of their suspicions, then this adventure takes a different course – see *Turn In Your Pirate Hat*, on page 179.

Background Investigation: There are several possible ways for the Travellers to investigate Rachando; they may come up with tactics not anticipated here. Any plausible approach has a chance of working – determine the most appropriate check.

Track the total Effect generated by all these checks.

Gathering Rumours: Average (8+) Investigate check (1D weeks, INT). Rachando claims to have been a free trader for years before coming to Drinax and establishing his bazaar; by asking questions in other systems, the Travellers discover that Rachando lied; he was only a free trader for a few months before arriving at the Floating Palace. His history before that is a mystery – where did he get his ship and cargo?

Observation: Difficult (10+) Deception check (1D days, INT). The Travellers watch Rachando going about his business. They learn that he meets with several fellow pirates and traders, the sort of people who might know about the Travellers' secret operations on behalf of the King.

Financial Analysis: Average (8+) Broker check (1D weeks, INT). Tracking Rachando's financial dealings turns up a suspicious set of transactions. As usual, Rachando trades basic commodities for treasures from the Floating Palace. All those supplies, though, can be traced back to GeDeCo suppliers within one or two jumps.

Hitting the Starport Bar: Difficult (10+) Carouse check (1D days, END). Getting various informants drunk in the palatial starport bar reveals that Rachando has several of his own agents working the bar and other entertainments of the Underlinth – he is spying on the Floating Palace.

False Signals: Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (comms) check (1D hours, EDU). By spoofing a handshake signal from the *Exalted Spirit*'s data drum, the Travellers can receive an answer from somewhere in the Floating Palace. There is definitely a GeDeCo agent somewhere on Drinax.

Sneaking Onto the *Invisible Hand:* Very Difficult (12+) Stealth check (1D minutes, DEX). Rachando's personal ship has elaborate security systems that can be bypassed by a talented thief. On board, the Traveller finds a transmitter of a similar design to the data drum, as well as encrypted instructions on a Vorito-made data crystal.

CONFRONTING RACHANDO

Call for a Difficult (10+) Persuade check (SOC) when the Travellers finally confront Rachando, and add the Effect of this check to the total gathered through their investigation (failing this check does not count towards the penalties for failing a check during the investigation). The total Effect determines how Rachando reacts.

Less than 0: Rachando not only denies the accusations, he goes straight to King Oleb and convinces the King that the Travellers are attempting to launch a coup in Drinax. See *Turn in your Pirate Hat* on page 179.

1-2: Rachando strenuously denies any involvement with GeDeCo, but the Travellers have assembled enough evidence for King Oleb to be suspicious. The king has Rachando imprisoned and the *Invisible Hand* ransacked until they turn up proof of the merchant's duplicity. Proceed as per *Interrogation*, but the public investigation of Rachando's affairs alerts GeDeCo that their agent is compromised. Run *Assassins* if you have not done so already.
3-5: Rachando admits involvement in GeDeCo. Run *Interrogation*, as well as *Assassins* if you have not done so already.
6-8: Rachando not only admits involvement, he is very willing to talk. The Travellers get DM+2 to all checks during *Interrogation.*
9-11: Rachando confesses everything. There is no need to roll during *Interrogation.*
12+: Not only does Rachando confess everything, he is so completely devastated by the Travellers' expose of his secret activities that he attempts to atone by giving them the *Invisible Hand.* It is a converted Far Trader with pop-up beam laser turrets.

Turn in Your Pirate Hat

Overly rash Travellers may end up blundering through the political minefield of the Floating Palace, and force King Oleb to censure or even disown them. If this happens, there are several ways to salvage the campaign.

- The Travellers can continue investigating Rachando. If they assemble an additional Effect of 6+ through investigation, they can convince the king that they are onto something.
- One of the other major characters of the Floating Palace becomes the Travellers' patron. They might ally themselves with Princess Rao or Prince Harrick.
- King Oleb promotes another pirate to command his pirate fleet. The Travellers must deal with their former employee being promoted over them for an adventure or two, until they can retake their rightful position.
- **** the King! We're pirates! Let's blow this overly linear campaign and go loot something!

5. THE ASSASSINS

The GeDeCo assassins can target the Travellers (if their investigations get too close to the truth) or Rachando (if he is in danger of being uncovered, or is already in prison). The assassins arrive as passengers on board a merchant ship from Marduk. There is one assassin per two Travellers, pretending to be a delegation of traders, here to negotiate for access to Drinaxian high-technology expertise. They wear the traditional garb of Marduk diplomats – elaborate head-dresses made to resemble the Sea Gods, including articulated tentacles controlled by tongue-puppetry, so the diplomat can communicate the gestural trade-language that is the only common language on their balkanised world. Beneath the masks, though, the assassins are all identical clones.

The Assassins can be run at any point during *The Merchant* or *Interrogation*, or in between. Send the assassins after the Travellers or Rachando whenever the action lags.

If the Travellers encountered the Widows of Blacksand in *Honour Among Thieves*, they may recognise the underlying approach, although the assassins use a different genetic template to the Widows.

The assassins might:

- Stalk the Travellers as they investigate Rachando.
- Pretend to know something useful about Rachadno, and lure the Travellers to an isolated ballroom or down onto the wasted surface of Drinax to ambush them.
- Stow away on board the Travellers' ship (or look for passage on board).
- Send out a distress call and wait for rescue (or 'rescue') by the Travellers.
- If targeting Rachando, the assassins might:
- Break into the prison while the Travellers are interrogating Rachando.
- Travel across the Underlinth and use an explosive device to gain access to the section of the prison containing Rachando.
- Hijack a ship and attempt to crash it into the prison.

Rachando can identify the assassins as GeDeCo clones.

GEDECO ASSASSIN

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	-	16 (vatgrown)

STR	10	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	14	EDU	10	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Deception 1,
END	12	SOC	9	Diplomat 0, Electronics (comms) 1, Flyer (grav) 2, Gun Combat (energy) 3, Gun Combat (slug) 3, Investigate 2, Medic 1, Melee (unarmed) 3, Persuade 1, Steward 1, Streetwise 2
EQUIPMENT				Neural Comm (TL14), Subdermal Armour (+3), Enhanced Vision Lightweight Polycarapace Armour (+12) Stunner (3D), Laser Pistol (3D+3), Gauss Rifle (4D)

6. INTERROGATION

Once they have Rachando in custody, the Travellers can interrogate him on any of several topics. He reveals the first entry in each category automatically; give more detailed information if the Travellers have earned it (by accumulating a high Effect during the investigation phase, excellent roleplaying, or good Persuade checks).

No matter what questions he is asked, he will always suggest the plan to break into the Vault (page 190). Ideally, let the Travellers draw the plan out of him; if they do not, have Rachando offer it in an attempt to save his own skin while preserving GeDeCo.

When roleplaying Rachando, keep in mind:

- He knows he is in trouble, but believes GeDeCo is much more dangerous than Drinax can ever be. He is looking to find that point of balance where he reveals enough about GeDeCo to convince the Drinaxi to spare his life, but not enough that he can never make amends with GeDeCo.
- He believes in the GeDeCo cause, and thinks the corporation is ultimately beneficial to the Reach. He also knows that GeDeCo members do ghastly, unthinkable things in pursuit of the company's goals.
- Factor the Travellers' reputation into his reactions. If the Travellers have a reputation as cunning tricksters, he will try to strike a deal. If they are mass murdering cutthroats, he will talk as fast as he can to save his own skin.

THE GENERAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

- GeDeCo is more than just a trading company; it conceals a secret conspiracy that manipulates events, governments and whole star systems across the Trojan Reach.
- The conspiracy's aim is to prepare the Trojan Reach to resist the Aslan, in order to protect the Imperium.
- The conspiracy is, in Rachando's opinion, ultimately beneficial to both the Imperium and the Reach. They do great and wonderful things – but there is nothing they will *not* do to further their plan.
- GeDeCo has a plan. He does not know the details, but knows that it involves a man named Jaskarl. A Very Difficult (12+) Science check (EDU) lets a Traveller remember a Professor Jaskarl who worked in psycho-historical modelling.

RACHANDO & GEDECO

- Rachando admits he is a spy for GeDeCo.
- He believes he is the only agent on Drinax, but cannot be certain. His only contact was his handler, a GeDeCo spymaster on Vorito called Nierr.

DRINAX & GEDECO

- Rachando's mission on Drinax was to observe shipping and space traffic, as well as note visitors to the Floating Palace.
- Vorito sees Drinax as a potential source of stability and advanced technology. Once Drinax has moved out of the shadow of its warmongering, Sindal-influenced past, it can become a useful part of the Trojan Reach.
- Rachando has (by default) little knowledge of the Travellers. If they have boasted openly about their piratical exploits on Drinax, or otherwise exposed themselves, then he has reported them to his superiors on Vorito. Otherwise, he assures them that GeDeCo is largely unaware of them (at least, as far as Rachando knows – if the Travellers went up against GeDeCo openly in *The Demon's Eye*, there is definitely a file on them).

GEDECO'S NEW HIGHPORT

- The new highport is exactly what it looks like; it means Vorito is once again open for trade and will bring lots more traffic past Drinax. This may offer more opportunities for piracy, but will also draw the attention of the Imperium towards Tliowaha subsector. This may interfere with the plans of the Drinaxians and their pirate allies – do the Travellers want the highport to reopen?
- The HighPort is heavily defended – the corporation will not tolerate a second attack. Rachando has no idea how saboteurs managed to make it on board the first time. The only window for a raid on the highport would be during the opening ceremony.

THE OPENING CEREMONY

- The ceremony will draw visitors from all over the subsector. While security will be tight, it might be possible for the Travellers to sneak aboard, either as guests or as part of some noble's entourage.
- Rachando suspects this gathering might be part of some scheme by GeDeCo, but has no idea what it could be. The company is capable of anything.

THE VAULT

- At the heart of the new highport is a mysterious Vault. The whole station was built around it and is clearly of immense significance to GeDeCo. Rachando was only there once, when he was sworn into the company's service, and he only saw a small portion of it. He believes that the Vault's contents are precious to GeDeCo.
- If the Travellers could break into the Vault and steal or threaten its contents, then they could negotiate with GeDeCo. Maybe they could come to an arrangement with the megacorporation. Both GeDeCo and King Oleb have a vision for a strong, united Trojan Reach, and poor Rachando has been trapped between these two visions.

Execute the Traitor, My Liege!

Travellers unconvinced by Rachando may choose to have King Oleb throw the merchant back in the dungeons, or have him airlocked. Rachando goes to his death pleading that while he may have spied on Drinax, he never truly betrayed them. The Travellers may choose to follow the plan of breaking into the Vault, or implement their own schemes to counter GeDeCo.

- Alternatively, if the Vault is at the heart of the highport, and the highport is vitally important to GeDeCo's plans, then blowing up the station could temporarily remove GeDeCo's influence from the Reach, giving the Drinaxians free reign to implement their own plans. Nierr once hinted there were weapons in the Vault.
- All Rachando knows about the Vault is its location (at the heart of the highport) and two of its security measures.
  - The door requires a DNA sample. He knows that his handler, Nierr, was on the approved list.
  - The door also required a passcard. Nierr did not have such a passcard – one of the guards that escorted Rachando into the Vault carried it.

PLANNING THE HEIST

Before the Travellers depart for Vorito, ascertain:

- Who the delegate from Drinax is (it may be one of the Travellers)
- Which ship they are taking to Vorito (taking more than a single ship will draw attention)

Depending on your preferred style of play, you may also wish to determine what specialised equipment the Travellers are bringing with them. It may be simpler and more dramatic to let the Travellers decide retroactively what criminal tools they brought along ('of course I brought an electronic codebreaker!') if you wish to avoid a lengthy planning session.

From Rachando, they know the Vault has at least two security systems – they need to obtain a passcode of the right security clearance (he has no idea what that clearance is), and a DNA sample from Nierr or someone else authorised to access the vault. If there are other barriers, they must cross them when they get there. It may be possible to bypass some of these security checks, but doing so takes time and risks triggering countermeasures.

Note that there is no time to do extensive reconnaissance of the highport before the opening ceremony.

7. THE UNVEILING

According to its designers, Vorito Highport is a rotating dodecahedron with reconfigurable docking arms extending from each primary vertex. To the Travellers, it resembles a metallic spider or maybe a squid, reaching out to strangle them.

They are not the only ship in the system when they jump in. Space here is crowded. Huge System Defence Boats in GeDeCo livery guard the approaches to the world. Megafreighters – true leviathans, ships of a size never seen in the reach outside the trade routes – move with the stately implacability of planets, while their escorts and tenders buzz around them like fast-orbiting moonlets. More interesting, from a pirate's perspective, is the cloud of smaller ships – traders, couriers, messengers and government transports – that cluster around the starport. Their IFF transmissions are a who's who of the Trojan Reach and beyond; Imperial signals, Aslan, and even Floriani. Minor systems too, especially those beholden to GeDeCo.

If the Travellers do not have the Drinaxian delegate on board, they are challenged as soon as they enter the system, and politely informed that Vorito is temporarily closed to non-authorised visitors. Please proceed to the refuelling station orbiting the gas giant Voree and then leave. Failure to comply will result in the use of force as sanctioned by the governor-general.

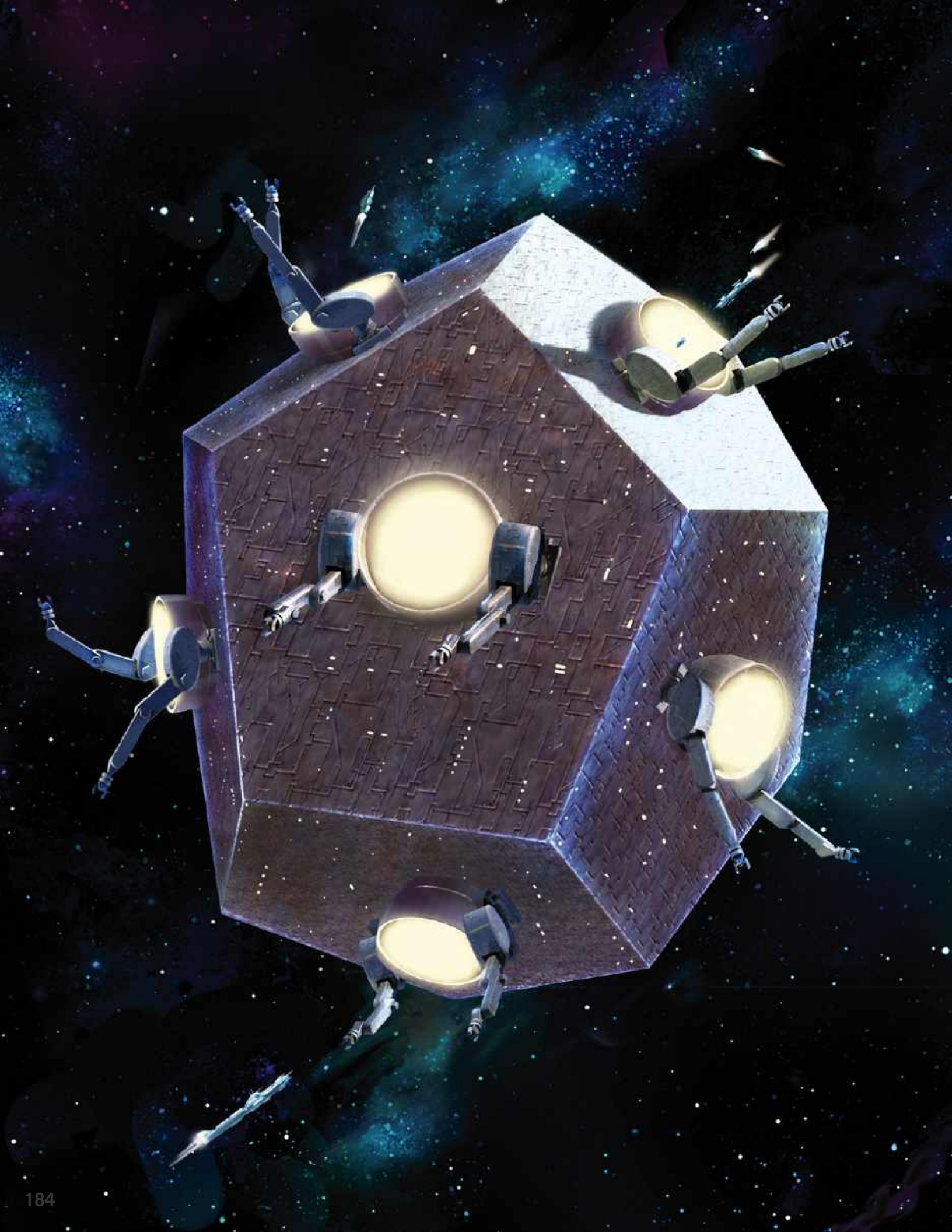
If they do have the delegate on board, and present appropriate credentials, they are permitted to dock. Vorito Highport is staggeringly huge. Right now, it is also very empty. The Travellers are escorted through huge hallways and concourses designed to welcome tens of thousands of visitors at a time. When this station opens, it will not just service the needs of the ten billion people living on Vorito – it will be the financial hub of the whole rimward half of the Trojan Reach.

Once they dock, the Travellers are greeted by Ammun Ko (see page 185) and escorted to the Grand Banqueting Hall.

SECURITY

Entry into the highport means passing through several levels of security.

- Before the Travellers' ship docks, it is scanned at close range by one of the System Defence Boats using a densitometer. This detects any unusual objects or weapons on board.
- After docking, the Travellers are met by Ammun Ko and an honour guard of GeDeCo security (one per Traveller). One of the GeDeCo guards has a handheld densitometer and bioscanner, which is programmed to detect weapons and other contraband. Any Travellers carrying illegal weapons may conceal them with a Difficult (10+) Stealth or Deception check (DEX). Failure means the guards request the Travellers return any illegal items to their ship, and keep a close eye on them after that, giving DM-1 to any further tests to sneak around the station.
- Ammun Ko gives each of the Travellers a passcard, and explains it is used to open doors, purchase items and track their needs on board the station. As a courtesy, their passcards have been preloaded with Credits, so anything they purchase on board the station is free (within reason – it is to cover drinks and souvenirs, not a new starship). The cards give them Level 1 Clearance, sufficient to access the luxurious corporate lounge suites and other exclusive facilities on board.
- The Travellers are escorted through several security checkpoints; at each checkpoint, Ammun Ko swipes her passcard to open the hatch. It is clear that the opening ceremony is taking place in an extremely secure section of the station - the Travellers may never get this close to the core again.



NOTABLE GEDECO PERSONNEL

AMMUN KO

Ammun Ko greets the Travellers when they arrive, and introduces herself as their personal liaison. She is smart, perky and very, very enthusiastic. She comes from Regina, in the Spinward Marches of the Imperium; crossing the wild and perilous Trojan Reach, even in a passenger liner, was the biggest adventure she has ever had. She has a datapad of facts about Drinax, and immediately launches into the hard sell, trying to convince the delegate and rest of the entourage to buy into a GeDeCo Development Contract. Why, with GeDeCo's backing, they could re-terraform the planet and make the radioactive wastelands habitable again in only five or six generations! For the low, low price of 5% of your planet's GDP, GeDeCo will bring its eco-engineering expertise to bear, and they will throw in an expanded starport for free!

Ammun has no idea about the Vault, Rachando, the conspiracy, the Jaskarl Plan or anything else. As far as she knows, GeDeCo is just a great company to work for.

If Princess Rao is the delegate, then Ammun clamps onto her like a star-struck limpet. A real life princess!

Security Clearance: Ammun has a level 2 passcard, and her DNA is not on the Vault registry.

Playing Ammun Ko

- Bubble with enthusiasm. Customs are 'quaint', aliens 'adorable' and pirates are 'just like out of the holos'.
- Carry a folder of notes. Refer to it constantly, as if your whole life script is (checks folder) written there.
- Smile. Smile. Smile more. Does it hurt? If not, you are not smiling enough.

FAE BORSHUNE

The administrator of the highport and one of the most prominent public faces of GeDeCo, Borshune is a former Imperial Navy officer who retired to take up a better-paying corporate job. She is not part of the inner core of GeDeCo, but is aware the company is more than it seems.

The last highport was destroyed by sabotage, and she is determined not to let that happen on her watch. She has a special hatred for pirates and other terrorists, and will tolerate no unusual or suspicious behaviour on her station. If 'Vorito Highport 5' were a television series about a space station that is a crossroads for humans and aliens, all alone in the night, then she would be the charismatic star.

If the delegate is Lord Wrax and the Travellers encounter Borshune at the ceremony, then the two of them get into a bitter argument about military tactics (specifically, the career of Gani Peras, the famed admiral of Sindal who played a part in *The Treasure of Sindal*).

Security Clearance: She has a level 4 passcard, and is on the DNA approved list.

Playing Fae Borshune:

- Keep a military bearing; stand up straight, speak crisply.
- Project strength; not only must you make it clear that Vorito Highport is an unassailable fortress, immune to pirate raids or sabotage, you have also been told to show delegates that GeDeCo can protect them from the vicissitudes of history
- Tap your finger on the table before making an announcement or declaring something; it not only draws peoples' attention, it also reminds you of firing your cruiser's spinal cannon at enemy ships

SECURITY CHIEF BRULE

The station's acting security chief is a Vargr. She was severely injured in a pirate attack on a GeDeCo outpost, but surgically and cybernetically rebuilt by the company. Now, she is fanatically loyal to GeDeCo. During the opening ceremony, she stalks through the room, monitoring everything through augmented senses and data links.

If Prince Harrick is the Delegate, he and Brule have a lot to talk about at the ceremony – both were brought back from near death by advanced technology.

Security Clearance: She has a level 3 passcard, but her DNA is not on the list.

Playing Brule:

- Deliver corporate management speak in the tone of voice you would normally use for feral roars and demonic chants. *GHRAWL! I am HAPPY to HELP you. Rrrgh! Have a NICE day!*
- Loom. Sniff the air. Look at people suspiciously.

LANDO NIERR

A dull, plump man, Nierr introduces himself as a 'planetary network externalities consultant' who can help your planet develop trade links with its neighbours. He is the conversational equivalent of white noise; inoffensive, almost relaxing, with the hint of a message or meaning beyond the reach of your ability to perceive. He is also one of the members of the inner conspiracy of GeDeCo, and is Rachando's handler.

Security Clearance: He has a level 2 passcard, and is on the DNA approved list.

Playing Lando Nierr:

- In public, be intensely boring. Speak in a low voice, hesitate. Talk about trade volumes and relative wealth indices.
- In private, you are more commanding, more determined, but still quiet. Drink information in, and give nothing away.
- Fold your hands in front of you and speak to them instead of the person you are actually talking to.

HIVER JIM

Perhaps the most exotic guest at the ceremony is a Hiver, who introduces itself as Jim; its real name is untranslatable. Jim is a 'consulting artist' for GeDeCo, and helped develop the Jaskarl Plan. The Sculpture (see below) is its work, and it's eager to talk about it while throwing back wine and cheese (Hivers do not metabolise alcohol like humans, but it is getting a terrific buzz off the cheddar). Apparently, it symbolises the 'invisible connections of historical necessity' and 'incorporates the observer into the art.' If the Travellers wait long enough, Jim gets intoxicated on cheese and starts groping the Travellers' hands with its manipulator, and even gives birth to a few larvae (Hivers treat their hatchlings as inconsequential vermin).

Security Clearance: Jim has no passcard, but its DNA is on the list. In fact, its hatchlings share enough of their parent's DNA that one of them could be used to bypass the genetic lock.

Playing Jim:

- Humans! Such simple, trusting creatures. So brave, though, always rushing blindly ahead without the slightest bit of planning or preparation. A whole cluster of civilisations fuelled by sheer undirected lust and greed. It must be so relaxing to be so stupid.
- If you can, emphasise Jim's alienness by climbing down under the table, and holding your hand up like a puppeteer using a glove puppet. Talk with animated hand gestures.

OTHER DELEGATES

Where possible, bring back previously established characters from your campaign to attend the party. Almost anyone who is vaguely connected to a planetary government in the Trojan Reach could show up on Vorito. If any characters from the campaign made a big impression on the Travellers, then they are at the party. Some potential candidates are listed below – adapt their descriptions and attitudes to match developments in your campaign. For example, if the Travellers accidentally shot Gerret Hodol, replace him with the maniacal Professor Rex Darke of Tech-World.

Unless otherwise noted, none of these delegates have any security clearances beyond the level 1 passcodes given to all visitors to Vorito.

Keeper Malos of Clarke (Honour Among Thieves): The lugubrious monk enjoys nothing more than bringing down a celebration by talking about death.

Grand High Provost Falx of Torpol (Honour Among Thieves): Falx has risen in station since the Travellers last encountered him, thanks to a GeDeCo development contract. He enthuses about the company's investments on Torpol.

Olais of Marduk (Honour Among Thieves): The lord of one of the more powerful domes on Marduk, Olais hopes to attract GeDeCo support so she can defend her people against Oghman raiders. She will complain to anyone who listens about the Oghman.

Vargas/Purser Vaughn (Treasure Ship): 'Vargas' was the purser on board the Imperial Treasure ship. He was also a GeDeCo spy. If that adventure ended with GeDeCo successfully spreading rumours of a false treaty, then Vaughn's triumph was rewarded with a new identity and position in the GeDeCo-influenced government of

Cordan. If it was a failure, then 'Vargas' was demoted to the rank of tramp trader, much like Rachando or Talbis Doherty (see *The Demon's Eye*) or Jarel Yean (see *Ihatei!*). Either way, he is a member of the conspiracy and here to report to Nierr. He nervously talks about trivia and the weather (there is no weather in space, but he tries anyway). Security Clearance: Passcode Level 2, DNA on the list.

Regent Stoylis of Bynri (Treasure Ship): The commander of the brave Star Guard of Byrni, Stoylis holds his world and its fleets in trust for the Emperor of Sindal. If GeDeCo succeeded in planting their false treaty, then Byrni has entered into a development contract with them; if the plot in *Treasure Ship* failed, then Stoylis is here as a courtesy only. He discusses Drinax's history and future with the Travellers – Drinax and Byrni have a lot in common, as both are strongly influenced by their Sindalian history.

Takhweirl of the Company of Profits That Rise Like Mist (Ihatei!): An Aslan trader from the world of Keiah, Takhweirl is eager to find trading partners outside the Hierate.

Gerret Hodol of TechWorld (The Demon's Eye): Depending on the events of *The Demon's Eye*, the Travellers may be secretly conspiring with Hodol to break Tech-World free of GeDeCo control, or he may be a loyal employee of GeDeCo, here to talk about the benefits of advanced technological research.

Warden Rannib of Number One (The Treasure of Sindal): The child ruler of Number One got to stay up past her bedtime for this party. She still thinks pirates are yucky.

Visionary Prophet Zarn of Ace (The Treasure of Sindal): She claims to be able to foretell the future in the storms of Ace, and tells anyone who will listen that a giant star dragon will eat its own tail when a hawk is struck by lightning.

Tiznee Zazzle of Salif (The Treasure of Sindal): The celebrity ruler of Salif adds a touch of tawdry glamour to the ceremony. Her secret police suspect the masses will revolt against her rule, so she is on the look-out for a planet to retire to. Drinax sounds nice.

Eridani, niece of the Duke of Tobia (The Game of Sun and Shadow): If the Travellers kidnapped her during *The Game of Sun and Shadow*, then they have got an awkward conversation ahead of them at the party.

Ht! Ujj!: A Barnai representative from the Florian League, Ht!'s idea of small talk is a little peculiar – '*what useful information can you convey to me in the next two minutes'* is her version of 'hello'.

MINGLING AT THE PARTY

The Travellers may wander freely about the party. They may extricate themselves from a conversation without causing offence with an Easy (4+) Carouse check (SOC). They may also make Carouse checks to get into a conversation with a specific GeDeCo rep or delegate (for example, if they want to get close to Nierr). The party is an excellent opportunity to offer plot hooks and side missions to the Travellers, or update them on events in the Reach.

Observant Travellers may spot other GeDeCo agents secretly making contact with Nierr. Call for Investigate checks (INT); a success means the Traveller notices a spy approaching Nierr.

THE SCULPTURE

In the middle of the room, surrounded by the best buffet table in the sector, is a curious sculpture of alien design. It looks vaguely like a tree made of glowing tubes and fist-sized nodes of what appears to be marble. It is quite grotesque, and exactly the sort of corporate-funded art project one would expect to see a starport like this; its deliberate ugliness makes the rest of the place seem even more polished and streamlined.

Anyone paying too much attention to the sculpture must make a Difficult (10+) END check to avoid developing a mild headache. Psionically gifted Travellers can tell the sculpture incorporates some sort of psionic technology.

A close examination reveals the sculpture is connected to the station's internal computer network by a high-density data cable. It is producing (or somehow picking up) a staggering amount of data. Tracing this connection with an Electronics (computers) check confirms the sculpture is connected to the secret Vault.

The sculpture is the work of Hiver Jim. It scans the thought structure of everyone in the room, generating psychographic profiles of their personalities and feeding that into the Jaskarl plan. This is not telepathy – it cannot read thoughts or memories – but does give insight into the instincts and personality types of the various delegates, which is immensely valuable to the psycho-historical predictions used by GeDeCo. The sculpture uses Hiver technology and techniques unknown in the Imperium.

Cutting the Cable: The sculpture is harmless, at least in the short term. Having their brains scanned by the sculpture will not affect the Travellers. However, it does underline GeDeCo's sinister intent.

The sculpture may be immediately useful as a distraction – if the Travellers sabotage the data cable, a swarm of GeDeCo techs swoop in to fix it as quickly as possible. Borshune claims it is a 'necessary adjustment of the environmental systems, nothing to worry about', but all the comings and goings can give the Travellers an opportunity to sneak away (see *Sneaking Out*, page 191).

THE CEREMONY

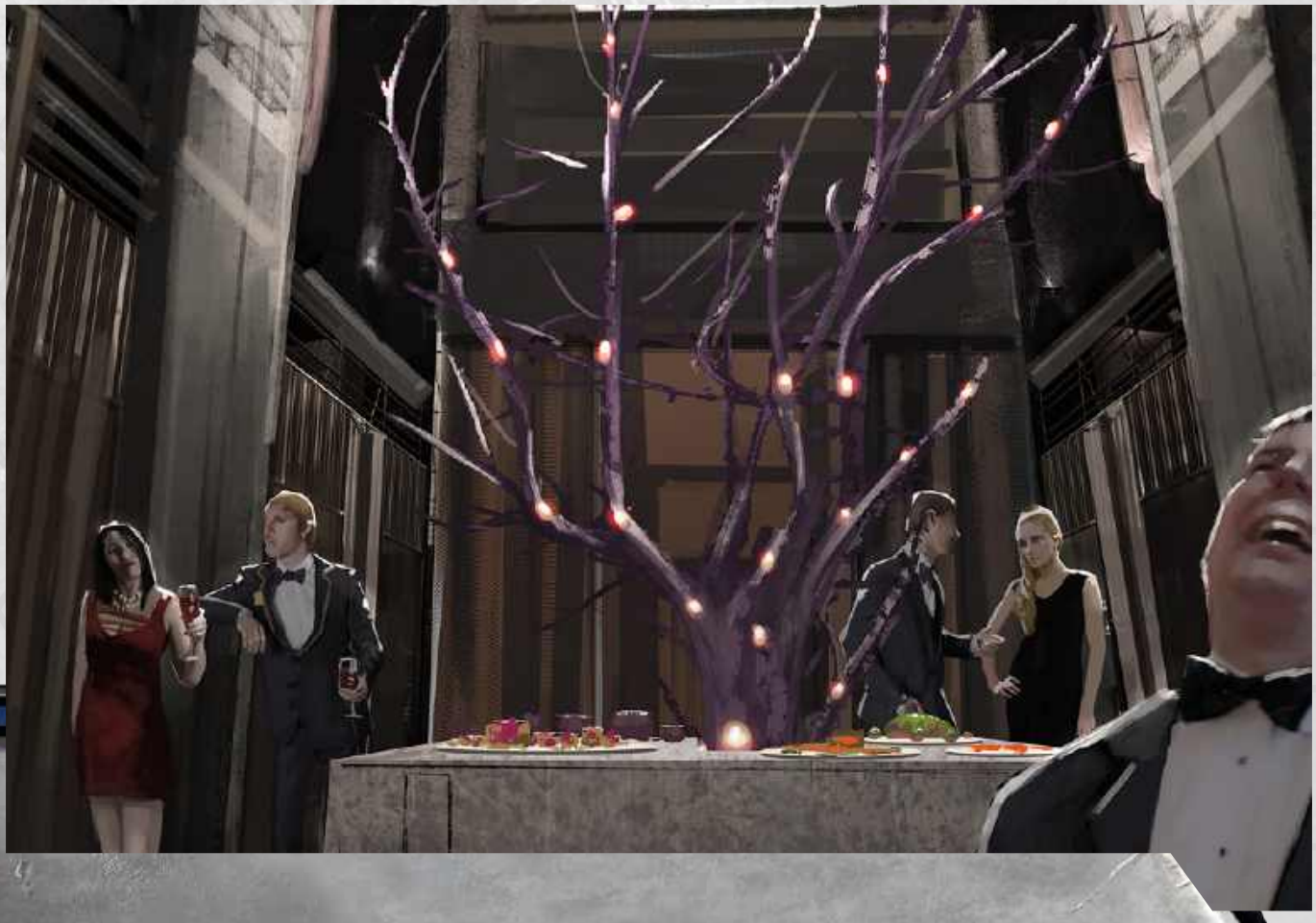
For those used to the wild excesses of King Oleb or the endless, dusty ceremonies of Drinax, the GeDeCo ceremony is dull but mercifully brief. To polite applause, Borshune address the crowd from a floating podium. She thanks all the delegates for attending, and gives a brief description of how GeDeCo's investments and partnerships have improved trade and technology across the Trojan Reach. Holographic displays around the room echo her words with charts and friendly diagrams. Brightly coloured arrows point to the future; curves climb joyously skywards showing how the Outrim Void is slowly becoming less of a war-torn wilderness, and more of a valued adjunct to the Imperium, and a safe and secure highway for trade with the Aslan and Floriani.

The re-opening of Vorito Highport, she claims, will usher in a new era of peace and prosperity for the Trojan Reach. The coming years will put an end to piracy and raiding, as GeDeCo intends to invest in more System Defence Boats and patrol ships to drive out these twin scourges. The coming years will unite the disparate worlds with trade links, and raise those planets that have fallen backwards to ever-higher levels of technology. GeDeCo Standard Development Contracts are the future for the Trojan Reach, and the highport is a symbol that the company is here for a very long time to come.

One wall of the banqueting hall becomes transparent, and a squadron of GeDeCo patrol ships takes up formation just outside. One of them releases a cloud of gas from a tank, and the others fire lasers and particle beams into the gas cloud. The intersection of the beams forms the GeDeCo logo, which burns for a moment in space before dispersing.

After the ceremony, the party bursts back into life. Knots of delegates gather and break up, agreements are made with or without GeDeCo mediation, friendships are forged, alliances broken and the whirl of galactic politics sweeps around the room. As the evening wears on, the business of diplomacy gives way to carousing; the real deals will be made later, in the small hours of the morning or in private meetings elsewhere on the station.

The Travellers, though, are here to break into the GeDeCo Vault, not to make deals. At least, that is what they think.



8. BREAKING INTO THE VAULT

Outside the sumptuous banquet hall, the station is still unfinished. All essential systems are in place, but it is a warren of metal corridors and exposed life support systems. In fact, it is much more like the rest of the Trojan Reach here than in the completed sections – most of the other spaceports and ships in this sector look similarly run-down and industrial.

Making their way through the highport, the Travellers come closer and closer to the central Vault. At times, they even catch glimpses of the Vault through portholes – it is a cube of black metal, scarred in places as if it was once hit by laser fire, and obviously much older than the rest of the space station. A pair of robot maintenance pods hover outside it, attaching power cables. Before the station is open to other traffic, the Vault will be walled away behind thick slabs of bonded neutronium, and no outsiders will ever know it was there.

To break into the vault, the Travellers need to get to the vault, bypass two major security systems, and defeat its internal defences – and they need to do all that before GeDeCo realise anything is amiss.

TIMING

Start by rolling 1D+6 to determine how much of a safety buffer the Travellers have before they are discovered. This safety buffer is referred to in the rest of the scenario as the Countdown.

Modify this Countdown as follows:

- Subtract 1 for each roll made by the Travellers that takes less than sixty seconds
- Subtract the Effect of a failed final roll in a task chain to bypass security systems
- Subtract 1D for each check that takes 1D minutes
- Add 1 if the Travellers succeed with an Effect of 4-5
- Add 2 if they succeed with an Effect of 6

If the Countdown drops below 0 and the Travellers are not within the inner Vault, then the alarm is raised. They have one more chance to make it into the Vault – just one more check. After that, hit them with a GeDeCo security team. Defeating the security team increases the Countdown by 1D. If they run out of time again, then the next security team is twice as big, fully equipped with battle dress, and has the delegate as a hostage.

Ideally, the Travellers should avoid doubling up on checks. Instead of calling for a check from each Traveller, they should instead use task chains to work together. For example, when leaving the party, one Traveller might make a Deception (INT) check to spot an opening, another could make Carouse (SOC) to cause a distraction, and finally one makes a Stealth (DEX) check to sneak out.

GEDECO ELITE GUARDS

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human			-	16 (vatgrown)
STR	10 (16)	**INT**	7	**SKILLS**
DEX	14 (18)	**EDU**	10	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Deception 1, Diplomat 0, Electronics (comms) 1, Flyer (grav) 2, Gun Combat (energy) 3, Gun Combat (slug) 3, Investigate 2, Medic 1, Melee (unarmed) 3, Persuade 1, Steward 1, Streetwise 2, Vacc Suit 2
END	12	**SOC**	9	
EQUIPMENT				Neural Comm, Subdermal Armour (+3), Enhanced Vision Battledress (+22) Stunner (3D), Laser Pistol (3D+3), Gauss Rifle (4D)

SNEAKING OUT

To sneak out of the party, the Travellers can make a Carouse or Deception check (1D minutes, SOC). Remember, the Travellers can accept DM-2 to their check to act more quickly, bringing the time needed down to 1D x 10 seconds).

Matching the right delegate to the right GeDeCo rep causes enough of a distraction to give DM+2. Lady Hil can bore anyone; she gives a flat DM+1 to sneaking out attempts. Other distractions (making a scene, sabotaging the Sculpture) should also give DM+2 or more.

AVOIDING DETECTION

To make it through the corridors while avoiding GeDeCo security cameras and patrols, call for Stealth checks (DEX). The Travellers might create a task chain involving:

- Electronics (sensors) check (1D minutes, INT) to disable security scanners
- Melee (unarmed) check (1D rounds, STR) to take down some guards without being noticed
- Engineer check (1D x 10 seconds, INT) to find their way through the station's maze of access tubes and crawlspaces

THE VAULT ENTRANCE

The door to the Vault is strangely unguarded, and the whole area around it is suspiciously deserted. The Vault itself is dark and oppressive. Even though it also appears unoccupied, it hums with energy.

BYPASSING SECURITY

There are two security systems that control access to the Vault. The Travellers need to swipe a passcard and provide a DNA sample.

Passcards: Level 3 access is needed to open the vault door. Call for an Electronics (computers) check (1D x 10 seconds, INT) to gain access. Apply DM-2 if the Travellers have only a Level 2 card, DM-4 if they have only a Level 1 Card, and DM-6 if they have no card.

DNA: If the Travellers have a DNA sample on the system registry, they can bypass this security system without a check. If they do not have a suitable sample, they must hack the sensor with an Electronics (computers) or Medic check (1D minutes, INT).

INTERNAL DEFENCES

If the Travellers did not have both a Level 3+ passcard and valid DNA sample, then their tampering activates the Vault's automatic internal defences. Hatches in the ceiling pop open to deploy combat drones.

IN THE VAULT

The doors slide open. Inside is an endless black space – no visible ceiling, no floor, no walls. Objects can be dimly perceived in the distance, cloaked by some sort of holographic distortion. Are they files, computer archives, objects, treasures? It is hard to tell.

When the Travellers enter, a hologram appears. It is an old man – well dressed, with a thin, devilish beard.

It is Professor Jaskarl – or, to be accurate, an interactive computer program created by Professor Jaskarl.

COMBAT DRONE

HITS	SPEED	TL
22	8 m	11
SKILLS	Gun Combat (energy) 2	
ATTACKS	Laser Rifle (5D+3)	
TRAITS	Armour (+9)	
PROGRAMMING	Basic (security)	

'I am Professor Jaskarl. I don't know who you are, but you fit a very specific psychohistorical profile. I can say with 89.4% certainty that you are or work for a resurgent polity within the Trojan Reach. You have used piracy and economic pressure to garner influence over neighbouring worlds, with the eventual goal of forcing concessions from a major power. I commend you on your efforts thus far.

'How do I know this, you might ask? I don't know if you're asking – my predictive methods apply only to large populations, to entire star systems and civilisations, not to individuals. I do not know anything about you, I can only know the probable shape of history.

'The larger the population, the more accurate my predictions. Applied to multiple sectors, probabilities become certainties. Some time ago, a consortium of concerned Imperial citizens hired me to apply my techniques to the future of the Spinward Marches. In brief, my conclusion is that, without active intervention, the Aslan Hierate will inevitably expand to conquer the entire Trojan Reach and Corridor sector, cutting the Marches off from the main body of the Imperium. Trillions will die.'

As he speaks, more holograms appear in darkness. The stars of the Trojan Reach – neutral stars in white, the deep purple of the Imperium, the cool blue of the Florian League, and the bloody red of the Aslan. The red expands, swallowing system after system until it crashes into Tobia and Pax Rulin.

'This disaster can be prevented. The General Development Company's secret purpose is to prepare the Trojan Reach. By uplifting and fortifying key civilisations, we turn them into... caltrops, into tiger traps that will disrupt and slow the Aslan advance. By labouring in secret over many generations, the company can alter the otherwise inevitable future.'

The hologram rolls back, then displays another potential future. In this version, the Aslan advance rolls forward much, much more slowly, then stops.

'My predictions show an upcoming intersection between your efforts and ours. As conflicts grows within the Aslan Hierate between their trader and warmonger clans, this pressure manifests as incursions into neutral space. You may have already experienced such attacks; they are but a small taste of the conflict to come.

'I have a proposition for you. Let us make your polity our lightning rod. We will fortify you, lend you our aid. This will draw the Aslan onto you.

'You will endure. You will fight bravely – but in the end, you must lose. Your destruction will have consequences that ripple out across the Trojan Reach, inspiring other systems to prepare for the Aslan assault. The General Development Company will protect you or a small few individuals of your choice, but the destruction must be otherwise absolute and... memorable.

'Refuse this proposition... and events will transpire as the mathematics dictate. There is still an 88% chance that the Aslan strike at you, even without GeDeCo assistance.'

The Travellers may question Jaskarl briefly. The hologram will not answer any questions that do not relate directly to its proposition, saying only that *'your query is outside the predicted parameters of this interaction*'. Subtract one from the Countdown for each question asked.

If the Travellers agree, then GeDeCo will support the Kingdom of Drinax – until the Aslan attack.

- After the attack, GeDeCo will ensure the Travellers are 'protected and provided for'. The Travellers may assume this means 'a cushy corporate retirement' or 'shot in the back of the head and buried in an unmarked grave' as they wish.
- The Aslan must destroy Drinax. The destruction of Drinax is a necessary adjustment to the psychohistorical progression of the Trojan Reach. If the Aslan attack is repelled, it will throw Jaskarl's calculations off and put the whole Imperium at risk. So, if the Travellers are to keep to their bargain with Jaskarl, they will have to ensure Drinax's destruction at the claws of the Aslan. They may have to sabotage their own defences.
- If the Travellers speculate about taking the GeDeCo offer, getting help from GeDeCo, but then not betraying Drinax when the crisis comes, then the simulation hologram just says '*your query is outside the predicted parameters of this interaction*'.
- If they ask why Drinax must fall, the hologram explains that the plan requires the reactivation of the golden age myth. To translate the subtle mathematics of psychohistory into crude words, the culture of the central Trojan Reach is still haunted by the memory of the Empire of Sindal. That empire is too far in the past to be of use, but if those cultural associations can be refired with the temporary ascension of a new empire, then the destruction of that new empire will be especially traumatic – it will be the shock needed to drive the whole Reach to adopt a new and more belligerent attitude towards the Aslan.
- If the Travellers refuse the GeDeCo offer, then they are free to go. As far as GeDeCo is concerned, Drinax is doomed anyway – there is an 88% chance that the Aslan will attack within a few years, and an equally high chance that any such attack will wipe Drinax out.

THE REST OF THE VAULT

Roll on the Vault table to determine what Travellers exploring the other sections of the Vault discover. There is no easy way to search the Vault, as the holographic darkness occludes everything until you are right on top of it. If the Travellers have a gadget like a densitometer, they make may a Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (sensors) check (INT) and add the Effect to their next roll on the Vault Treasures table. The Travellers get one roll on the table for each point of Countdown remaining. Note that there is no guarantee that the Travellers will be able to *keep* these treasures – see *Escaping the Vault.*

Vault Treasures

2D	Useful Item Discovered
2-4	Nothing – oh, there might be something buried deep in these corporate financial reports or personnel archives, but it is not immediately obvious.
5	MCr1D in physical Credits, gold, jewels, bearer bonds and other easily portable treasures.
6	Schematics for the highport, along with a high-clearance computer access terminal. With these, the Travellers may be able to prepare an escape route for themselves by opening hatches, redirecting maintenance robots, or just overloading the station's reactors and running for their ship while sirens blare.
7	MCr2D in physical credits, gold, jewels, bearer bonds and other easily portable treasures.
8	Information about a GeDeCo scheme on another world; exposing the scheme moves that world one step towards Haven.
9	Information about an exceedingly valuable cargo being shipped through the Reach – a tempting target for piracy.
10	The identity of a GeDeCo agent in a position of power on a neutral planet; exposing that agent moves the world two steps closer to Haven.
11	Computer archives containing the Jaskarl calculations. Destroying these will severely disrupt GeDeCo's operations in the reach.
12+	Something unusual – an Ancient relic, cryo-frozen clones of key Imperial officials, some lost treasure from the Sindalian empire, a Black Globe generator, or a psychohistorical planning document for a scheme that, if exploited, moves a world three steps closer to Haven

DESTROYING THE VAULT

If the Travellers brought explosives or heavy weapons with them (and somehow got them on board the station without being detected), they can damage the Vault with its precious Jaskarl archives. The hologram and associated computer systems are not the only copy of the Jaskarl Plan, but are the most up-to-date psychohistorical simulation, and have all the added data from the Hiver sculpture. Destroying the Vault will therefore set GeDeCo's plans back by several years.

ESCAPING THE VAULT

If the Travellers have any Countdown left, they can try to escape. Closing the door and leaving no trace requires a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check (1D, INT) minutes, and a Difficult (10+) Investigate check (1D minutes, INT) to remove forensic evidence. They can return to the party, have a few expensive cocktails on GeDeCo's tab, then stroll back to their ship, having committed the perfect crime.

Alternatively, they can just race to their ship and blast off, and hope they make the 100-diameter jump limit before they are caught by GeDeCo (you could have GeDeCo let them go – remember, GeDeCo *want* a 'lightning rod' like Drinax to take the brunt of the next inevitable Aslan attack).

TIME TO LEAVE THE PARTY

If the Travellers are out of Countdown, then a heavily armed squad of GeDeCo marines arrives at the Vault to take them into custody. The squad are mostly hulking, cybernetically augmented brutes in battle dress, but at their head is Mr. Nierr. He has the Drinaxian delegate as a hostage, if necessary.

GeDeCo security relieve the Travellers of any money or gear stolen from the Vault, as well as any weapons, but otherwise do not ask any questions or interrogate them. If the Travellers try to describe what they saw, Nierr just shakes his head and says '*it's better not to talk about it'.* Fighting back or arguing with Nierr results in violent repercussions; while the Jaskarl Plan calls for GeDeCo to let the Travellers go, they do not have to let them go unscathed.

If the Travellers try to follow Rachando's advice about negotiating with GeDeCo by holding the Vault's contents hostage, then Nierr just sneers at them.

'We only make deals on our own terms. You have already had our offer.'

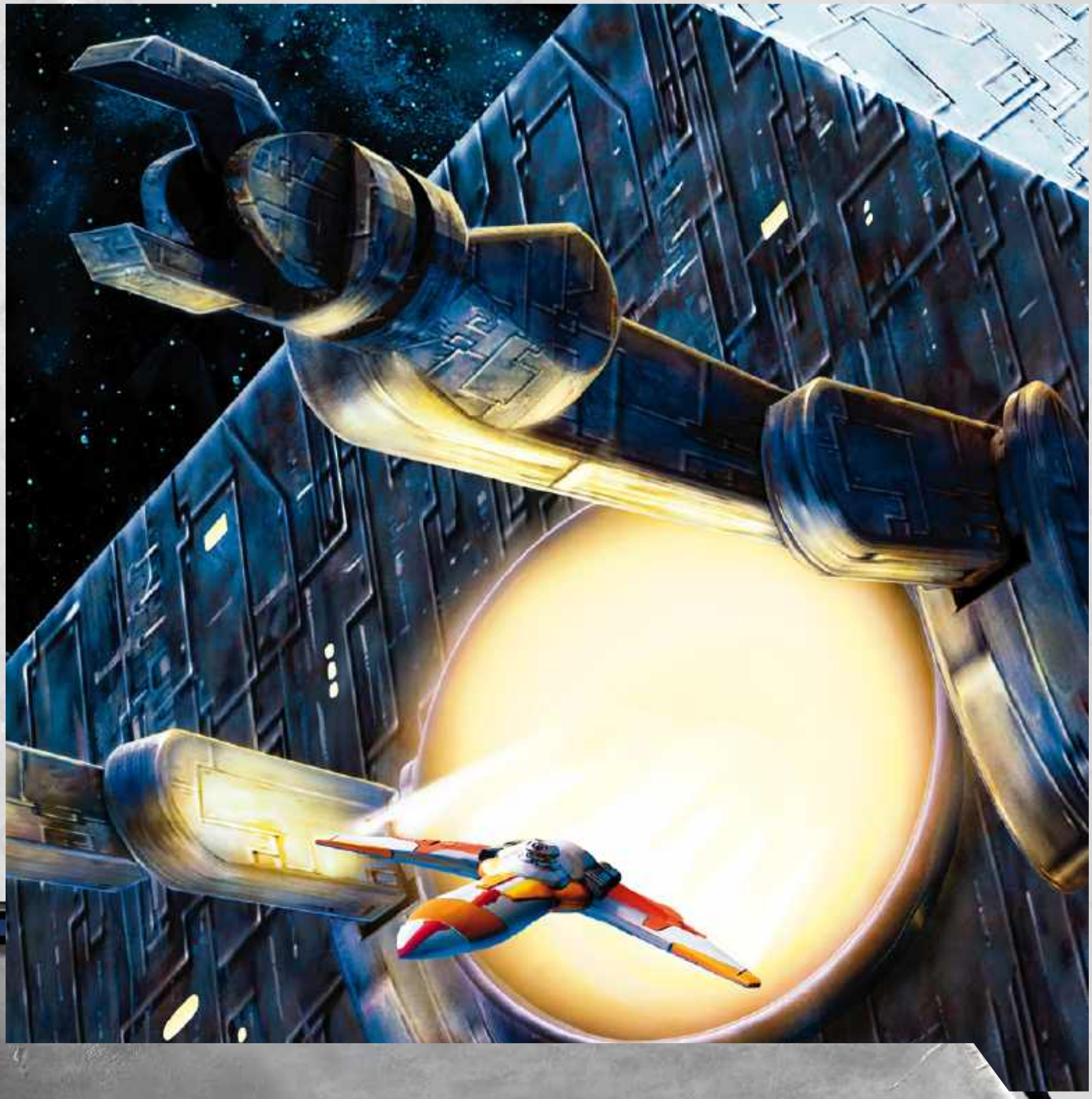
NULL CHOICE

If you believe in psychohistory and the Jaskarl Plan, then it makes little difference what decision the Travellers make in the darkness of the Vault. Whether they accepted the hologram's offer or not, whether it is Drinax or some other world that is attacked and destroyed by the Aslan, whether it is the Travellers or someone else – history will play out as it must.

King Oleb gambled that a few brave souls could change the destiny of an Empire. The General Development Company hedged their bets, and believe the destinies of Empires are dictated by population pressures, economics, the needs of the masses, and the inevitable forces of history.

If the Travellers did take the hologram's deal, then GeDeCo covertly builds up Drinax – the stronger and more respected Drinax is, the more effective its fall will be as a warning and inspiration for the rest of the Reach according to their psychhistorical predictions. The Travellers may roll 3D, and move ports towards Haven a number of times equal to their total (so, it would cost 7 to move a port from Hostile to being a Haven).

The full ramifications of the Travellers' choice – and whether or not they flee Drinax before the end – will be determined in *Finale.*



C H A P T E R - E L E V E N

THE PRODIGAL OUTCAST

'Conflict is the primary driver of Aslan society. Humans are instinctively non-confrontational except when threatened or unable to deflect conflict; Aslan respond to threats with threats, and embrace rather than deflect challenges. Every situation, every word is on some level a conflict to the Aslan mind. Someone must always lose.'

- Diplomatic Primer on Matters Pertaining to the Aslan Hierate, Imperial Office of Publications, Published in Deneb, 1010.

This adventure takes place primarily in the Tliowaha subsector, and begins on Drinax.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

War takes many forms among the Aslan. Without their codes of honour and traditions of ritual conflict, they would tear themselves apart in their insatiable desire for more territory, or dash their civilisation to pieces against the rocks of more powerful neighbours. They must sheathe their claws in custom to ensure they have a future.

To break these codes is to incur the wrath of an entire civilisation.

The danger of doing so is immense. The reward, even greater.

In this adventure, the Travellers are recruited by Kasiyl. For many years, he has been an exile in King Oleb's floating court, a beggar-prince who refuses to talk about his past. Now, he has discovered a way to reclaim his birthright. Kasiyl was condemned to exile because he murdered a noble of another Aslan clan, the *Tokohfealrs*. This murder was committed during a War of Assassins, an Aslan ritual where members of both warring clans may legally assassinate each other, with victor going to the first authenticated blood spilt. These wars are overseen by Aslan judges called *earleatrais*.

In this case, Lokharl the *Earleatrais* declared Kasiyl's kill illegal. Instead of being a legitimate strike in a sanctioned War of Assassins, Kasiyl had committed murder – but the rules governing Wars of Assassins are ancient and outdated, and take no account of modern weapons or medical treatments.

The *Tokohfealrs* won the War of Assassins. To avoid an escalation of the war, Kasiyl was sentenced to exile. Everything hinged on the controversial decision of the *earleatrais*. Kasiyl always believed the *earleatrais* broke his sacred vow of neutrality and deliberately favoured the *Tokohfealrs*. Now, he has a chance to find out the truth – the second-son of Lokharl, the *earleatrais* who judged Kasiyl, has come of age and is now adventuring in the Trojan Reach. Find that young Aslan, capture him, and use him as leverage to force his father to come clean, allowing Kasiyl to return to the *Ahroay'if* with honour – a simple plan.

And one that risks bringing chaos to the Aslan in Tliowaha subsector. When the Prodigal returns, there will be a slaughter...

Playing Kasiyl

Kasiyl is the lynchpin of this adventure. Ideally, the referee introduces Kasiyl to the Travellers well in advance of starting this part of the campaign, so they are somewhat invested in his fate (*Ihatei* describes one possible such scenario).

When playing Kasiyl, make sure he does not become the Travellers de facto leader. This may start out as his plan for revenge, but it should quickly pass into the hands of the Travellers once they realise Kasiyl has bitten off more than he can chew (and for an Aslan, that is an awful lot...).

THE TRUTH OF THE KNIFE

To understand the decision of the *Earleatrais*, and the size of the hornet's nest that the Travellers are unwittingly poking, look to the complexity of relations between Aslan clans.

Start with the *Ahroay'if.* They were once a very minor clan, one of the first to seek out new territories across the Great Rift. They became a vassal clan of the *Tlaiowaha*, and prospered under their patronage. For a time, the *Ahroay'if* were used as warriors and mercenaries by the *Tlaiowaha*, whose fighting forces are infamously weak. It was the *Ahroay'if* who destroyed the old Kingdom of Drinax, when the Drinaxian kings threatened the *Tlaiowaha* trade routes.

In recent centuries, trade with the Imperium has made the *Tlaiowaha* even richer. Their *Ahroay'if* vassals have also grown rich and powerful, and fat and lazy, on their cut of the profits. Some elements within the *Ahroay'if* decided it was time to put this wealth to better use, and started preparing for wars of conquest, building new warships and training new troops.

This military buildup alarmed the *Tlaiowaha*. So much of their fortune depends on trade routes that go through *Ahroay'if* territory. If their vassals grew too powerful, they might decide to change their relationship with the *Tlaiowaha* and demand a more equitable arrangement. The *Tlaiowaha* looked for a way to keep the *Ahroay'if* in their place.

They found it when the *Ahroay'if* launched an attack on a minor clan, the *Tokohfealrs*. When Kasiyl used a weapon of questionable legality, the decision on whether the attack was legal fell to *Earleatrais* , of the *Yerlyaruiwo* clan.

The *Yerlyaruiwo* are keepers of Aslan honour – very traditional, very upright, highly respected. Even they, however, are open to bribes from the bottomless coffers of the *Tlaiowaha*. The *Tlaiowaha* bribed the *Yerlyaruiwo* to make sure decided against the *Tlaiowaha's* own troublesome vassals, the *Ahroay'if.*

Shamed by defeat against the *Tokohfearls*, the warlike faction of the *Ahroay'if* fell out of favour in the councils of the clan. The *Tlaiowaha's* trade routes through *Ahroay'if* space were once again secure, and *Yerlyaruiwo's* reputation remains intact – so long as no-one exposes the bribe paid to influence …

KASIYL

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Male	34 (5 Aslan terms)

STR	9	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	9	EDU	9	Admin 1, Advocate 2, Broker 1, Carouse 0, Deception 1, Diplomat 2, Electronics (computers) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Gunner 0, Independence 2, Leadership 1, Mechanic 1, Melee (natural) 2, Persuade 2, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Science 0, Streetwise 2, Survival 1, Tolerance 1, Vacc Suit 2
END	10	SOC	2 (12)	

EQUIPMENT Combat Vacc Suit (9), Yeheal Autorifle (3D, Auto 2)

Playing Kasiyl

- Reveal as little of yourself as possible. Your past must remain sealed.
- You've lived among humans long enough to understand their ways – including their natural fear of Aslan. Use that to your advantage.
- Spend a lot of time meditating. Suppress your emotions.

1. THE HUNTER'S QUARRY

Kasiyl knows Lokharl's second-son has left the protection of the Hierate and is abroad in the Trojan Reach.

He knows that if he captures the boy, he will have leverage over the hatred, treacherous *earleatrais.* He knows that he needs a ship, but does not have one – the Travellers do.

Kasiyl is an Aslan male; he was bred to be a warrior and leader, unconcerned with petty details like money or how things work. Even though he has picked up a few ranks in Independence (the skill that allows Aslan males to function without female supervision), he is still singularly ill-equipped to hire the Travellers for the mission.

So, he turns up at their doorstep like a cat who has killed a mouse and wants to show the spoils of victory. Pick some enemy of the Travellers (either one created during their careers, or one they have made for themselves over the course of the campaign). Kasiyl drops the beaten and blooded foe in front of the Travellers and announces he has done them a favour; they should do one for him in return.

If your Travellers do not have enemies, then either wait a few minutes for them to make some, or else have Kasiyl offer them something else valuable but unexpected.

THE QUARRY

Kasiyl explains that he wishes to speak to another Aslan, a young *ihatei* named Hwehalokharl, who recently came of age and embarked on a quest for territory as is traditional. His contacts in the Hierate report that Hwehalokharl arrived at the camp on Kteireo six weeks earlier. Hwehalokharl must be taken alive.

Kasiyl initially refuses to explain what he wants with the young male but if the Travellers insist, he admits Hwehalokharl is the key to restoring his honour, and that he needs Hwehalokharl to find the boy's father who wronged him. Any more than that is a private matter – although he does hint that he will be able to greatly reward the Travellers if they aid him (check out the *Conflicting Stories* sidebar on page 205).

Finding Hwehalokharl: If the Travellers have already played through *Ihatei!*, then their decisions there determine where they can find Hwehalokharl. What happened in the camp on Kteireo? Are the young Aslan fighting on Fantasy, or Hilfer, or stuck in the ongoing war on Akoaft? Are they still sitting in the camp, arguing over which planet to invade next?

The Exile & The Princess

If the Travellers spend time on Drinax, one of them may see Princess Rao in deep conversation with Kasiyl. This whole scene is partly her doing. Does she have Kasiyl's best interests in mind, or is the ensuing chaos her design? Is she trying to cause chaos and strife in the Aslan Hierate to weaken them before Drinax makes its declaration? Rao's manipulations are further explored in *Blood of the Star Dragon.*

Hwehalokharl Rumours

2D	Rumour
2	Hwehalokharl died in battle (false – he was merely wounded and has since made a full recovery).
3-4	A false rumour about Aslan *ihatei* raids sends the Travellers in the wrong direction (DM-1 to their next attempt to find him).
5-6	Hwehalokharl is flying a standard 100-ton *ihateisho* scoutship (false – he arrived on Kteireo on one).
7	Rumours of Hwehalokharl's current location give DM+1 to checks to find him.
8-9	Hwehalokharl is part of the retinue of an Aslan *ihatei* from the wealthy *Yerlyaruiwo* clan. They are flying a powerful 1,000-ton *Aositoah* cruiser, commanded by Teirlas. Knowing this grants DM+1 to checks to find him, as the Travellers can search for Teirlas instead.
10-11	Hwehalokharl's father is an Aslan of some importance – a respected *earleatrais* judge. His father's influence helped get him his position.
12	By chance, the Travellers arrive at the same time as Hwehalokharl visits the current system.

If they have not yet played through *Ihatei!*, then you can segue into that adventure now, or just have Hwehalokharl be one of the many Aslan staying at the camp on Kteireo. Tracking him down once the Travellers know the right system requires a Very Difficult (12+) Investigate check (1D, INT) months if they have no more efficient way of finding him; give the Travellers plenty of DMs for clever plans or efficient use of their contacts or allies. Failure means that Hwehalokharl has moved to another system before the Travellers find him.

The Travellers may also obtain rumours about Hwehalokharl's movements and background with an Average (8+) Carouse or Investigate check (1D days, SOC), with DM-2 if they have no Aslan with them. If they successfully obtain rumours, roll on the Hwehalokharl Rumours table. Rumours 6- are false; rumours 7+ are true.

Travelling in Aslan Space

Refer to *Ihatei* for rules on travelling in Aslan space. Restrictions on Kasiyl and the risk of assassins still apply.

During the Hunt...

Use the time spent hunting for Hwehalokharl to put the Travellers into an Aslan frame of mind. This adventure is all about the balance between clans, between public and private perceptions of honour, between the instinctive Aslan hunger for territory and expansion and their increasing dependence on trade with the Imperium. While it is presented as a simple heist – find Hwehalokharl, restore Kasiyl to a place of power, get rewarded by him – the situation is actually much more complicated. Travellers who blindly follow Kasiyl's instructions will find themselves making things worse for Drinax and themselves.

2. CAPTURING THE QUARRY

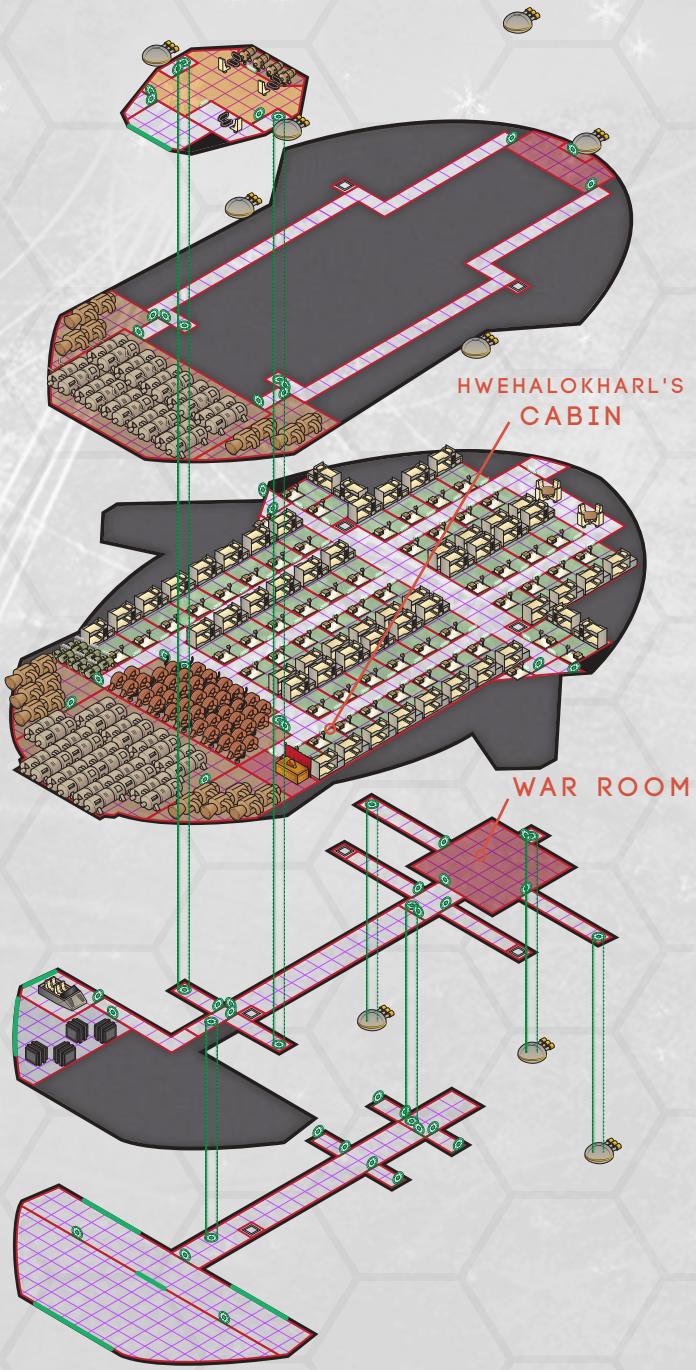
Hwehalokharl serves on board an *Aositaoh*-class cruiser commanded by his distant relative Teirlas of the *Yerlyaruiwo*. That clan (as Kasiyl can tell the Travellers, or as someone with any knowledge of the Hierate knows) are one of the most powerful and influential. Together with their allies and vassals, they are the single most powerful bloc in the Aslan ruling council, the *Tlaukhu*. The *Yerlyaruiwo* see themselves as the keepers of Aslan honour and tradition. They are also politically conservative, preferring to keep the peace with the Imperium and make small, incremental expansions of Aslan territory instead of gambling on all-out war. As the Hierate slowly shifts towards trade and industry instead of combat, the influence of the *Yerlyaruiwo* is slowly diminishing.

What that means, for the Travellers, is that Teirlas is wealthy and powerful enough to be given a ship ten times larger than the average gift to a young male, that crossing him will have dangerous repercussions, and that he is unlikely to be willing to risk too much – he will not be raiding deep into the Reach, but will use his firepower and family name to claim a respectable territory somewhere closer to home.

Once the Travellers locate Teirlas' ship, they need to capture Hwehalokharl alive. There are several options for this, and the Travellers may, of course, come up with their own schemes. If present, Kasiyl suggests challenging Teirlas or else shadowing and kidnapping Hwehalokharl.

Direct Attack: If the Travellers think they can take down a 1,000 ton cruiser with the vessels they have on hand, they can try attacking the ship directly. There are likely other Aslan ships in the area that will come to Teirlas' aid, so the Travellers may only have a few rounds in which to incapacitate the cruiser. Teirlas fights on for as long as he can (surrendering only if his ship is unable to continue, or if reduced to Hull 50 or less), but will hand Hwehalokharl over to keep his crew alive if the Travellers give him that option.

Infiltrate & Kidnap: If any of the Travellers are Aslan, they can attempt to join Teirlas' crew by posing as *ihatei* or mercenaries and succeeding at an Average (8+) Persuade check (SOC). Non-Aslan may do the same at DM-4. Alternatively, the Travellers could break into the ship when it is docked or landed. From there, they must sneak through the ship and locate Hwehalokharl. His cabin is the second stateroom forward of the shrine on the quarter deck; when on duty, he can be found usually on deck 2; Teirlas has converted the missile storage bay into a war room for planning ground invasions.



Shadow & Kidnap: The best, albeit slowest option for the Travellers is to follow Teirlas' ship until it lands, then follow Hwehalokharl until they can grab him when he is vulnerable. Teirlas spends 2D weeks in whatever system the Travellers found him in (likely the same world they redirected the ihatei too in *Ihatei!*), before returning to Tliowaha (Tliowaha/0308) for celebration. Shadowing the cruiser may require a task chain of Pilot, Electronics (sensors) and Astrogation checks.

War & Kidnap: Teirlas and his retinue are looking for a war where they can win territory. All the Travellers need to do is shadow the cruiser until it lands, sneak onto the battlefield, and grab their target.

Challenge: A Difficult (10+) Diplomat check (TER) lets the Travellers convince Teirlas to accept a challenge to a duel – he will hand over Hwehalokharl if the Travellers put up something equally valuable in exchange. It will be a two-on-two fight – Teirlas and Hwehalokharl against two Travellers.

TEIRLAS' RETINUE

Teirlas has some 500 Aslan followers, between the hundred or so on board his cruiser, those following along in an *Owatarl*-class 600-ton tender that carries the bulk of his supplies, and a swarm of 100-ton *ihateisho* scouts. The loudest are landless males, second- and third-sons of wealthy Aslan who came of age in the last *akhuaeuhrekhyeh* ceremony, but most of them are older males from lower social levels who follow the banners of the richer young bloods, veteran female mercenaries who have fought alongside *ihatei* before, and a few ambitious female technicians and pursers from poorer families hoping to attract a wealthy husband.

TEIRLAS

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Male	16

STR	11 (17)	INT	9	SKILLS
DEX	9 (12)	EDU	10	Drive 0, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Jack-of-all-Trades 1, Leadership 1, Melee 0, Tactics 0, Tolerance 0, Vacc Suit 2
END	8	SOC	13	
EQUIPMENT				Aslan Battle Dress (+19), Autorifle (3D, Auto 2)

Playing Teirlas:

- You are a warrior prince, born with a silver spoon in your mouth and an ancestral sword in your claw. You are the chosen one.

A scion of the *Yerlyaruiwo*, Teirlas was born to rule. Thousands of years of Aslan history and honour stand behind him; he is the descendant of kings. The *Yerlyaruiwo* are perhaps the oldest and most respected of the clans, the true aristocracy. He stands to inherit vast estates deeper in the Hierate if any of his uncles die without issue, so this whole expedition into the Reach is a chance for him to see the galaxy and have some fun, not the life-of-death scrabble for territory it is for others. He is therefore fascinated by humans and other strange creatures, and is eager to learn more about life outside the Hierate.

If the Travellers cross him or attack him, though, he will strike back with the full fury of his clan.

HWEHALOKHARL

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Male	22

				SKILLS
STR	9	INT	10	
DEX	8	EDU	10	Advocate 1, Diplomat 1, Gun Combat (Slug) 1, Melee (natural) 1, Science (history) 2, Stealth 1, Tolerance 1
END	7	SOC	9	

EQUIPMENT	Combat Vacc Suit (+9), Autorifle (3D, Auto 2)

Playing Hwehalokharl:

- Be slightly self-effacing, nervous, even nerdy. Then remind the humans that you are a seven-foot-tall alien bred for war.

As befitting the son of a respected *earleatrais*, Hwehalokharl is a studious young Aslan, always with his snout buried in a scroll. He was lucky to meet up with Teirlas, and hopes that their association will last beyond this expedition – a place in Teirlas' court as a councillor or envoy would be ideal for him. He knows Kasiyl's case – he has studied his father's career – and remembers there were several meetings with senior emissaries from other clans, which is unusual, as such cases are normally decided only by consultation with *tala'tyaeo* and *tala'si'khiraeohaor*, scrolls of the ancestors and scrolls of precedent.

He considers non-Aslan to be unpredictable, uncultured barbarians who commit random acts of violence, and the only safe and sane response is to get away from them as quickly as possible.

EASTEAKH

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Male	36

				SKILLS
STR	12	INT	6	
DEX	7	EDU	4	Gunner (turret) 2, Engineer (j-drive) 2, Heavy Weapons (man portable) 3, Independence 2, Jack-of-all-Trades 2, Leadership 1, Mechanic 2, Melee (blade) 2, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Vacc Suit 2
END	10	SOC	4	

EQUIPMENT	Ceremonial Armour (+4), Taoyuhrir Heavy Machinegun (4D+3, Auto 4), Reaver's Axe (4D)

Playing Easteakh:

- Always look on the dark side. Always anticipate what is going to go wrong. Always expect the worst – and then hit it with your giant axe.

Not all of the *ihatei* are young nobles; Easteakh has twenty years of battle experience on Teirlas. He is one of the host of veteran warriors who sign on with whatever *ihatei* has ships and guns to supply them. He is notoriously unlucky to have never won his own territory despite all the wars and campaigns he has fought in – it is not for lack of courage or fighting skill. His lack of territory makes him morose and prone to depression, but is terrifyingly fierce when roused.

TEEAHTA

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Female	20

				SKILLS
STR	8	INT	9	Admin 2, Athletics (dexterity) 1, Electronics (computers) 1, Electronics (sensors) 1, Gun Combat 0, Mechanic 1, Pilot (small craft) 3
DEX	10	EDU	11	
END	8	SOC	5	

EQUIPMENT	Combat Vacc Suit (+9), Autorifle (3D, Auto 2)

Playing Teeahta:

- By Aslan standards, she is a stereotype – the ambitious female who studies combat and technical skills purely to attract an *ihatei* noble – but there is no comparable concept in human society. Play her as a cross between a hot-shot fighter pilot and a Jane Austen character.

Teeahta comes from a low-ranked Aslan family, but ranks and lineages do not mean as much out on the hunt, so she and Teirlas share a bed. This is precisely why she went to the *ihatei* camp – young males hunt territory, some females hunt young and promising males. Her family groomed her to be a suitable match for a higher-ranking *ihatei* – she spent years learning the finer arts of estate management and etiquette, while also studying to be a combat pilot and weapons technician.

Aslan males can marry multiple females if they have the territory to support them; Teeahta cannot expect to be his first wife, but even becoming Teirlas' second or later wife would be a huge advancement in her family's standing in Aslan society. She is therefore fiercely protective of her new lover.

SAHRI

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Female	28

				SKILLS
STR	7	INT	9	Broker 1, Carouse 1, Electronics (comms) 2, Electronics (computers) 1, Electronics (sensors) 2, Engineer (j-drive) 2, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Gunner (turret) 2 Mechanic 1, Melee (natural) 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1, Tolerance 2
DEX	8	EDU	7	
END	9	SOC	6	

EQUIPMENT	Combat Vacc Suit (9+), Autorifle (3D, Auto 2)

Playing Sahri:

- Is the current situation helping your employer win territory, and therefore helping you get paid? If not, then make the current situation go away. Do not let the nonsense that males and aliens (and especially male aliens) seem to cause wherever they go stop you from getting paid.

Sahri is another veteran campaigner. Unlike Teeahta, she has no interest in marrying and taking care of some land-owning male – she is in this purely for the money. She is a professional mercenary, specialising in running campaigns for *ihatei*, and has fought in wars all along the Aslan border. Of all Teirlas' retinue, she has the most experience in dealing with aliens outside the Hierate.

UHTO

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Male	16

STR	9	INT	10	SKILLS
DEX	8	EDU	10	Gun Combat (slug) 2, Gunner (turret) 1, Independence 1, Mechanic 1
END	7	SOC	9	

EQUIPMENT	Combat Vacc Suit (9+), Autorifle (3D, Auto 2)

An eager young Aslan, Uhto is typical of most of the males in Teirlas' retinue – he is out on his own for the first time, and wants to fight; to see the galaxy, and to claim a chunk of it as his territory. Every cell in his body yearns for a land to call his own.

3. THE CAPTIVE

Once the Travellers have secured Hwehalokharl, they need to stash him somewhere safe while they approach his father Lokharl.

If Kasiyl has not already explained why he wants Hwehalokharl, he does so now, telling the Travellers he was wronged by Hwehalokharl's father and that he intends to expose the crime and reclaim his place in Aslan society. The Travellers may question Hwehalokharl on the topic; a Persuade check (INT) is needed to get the young Aslan to discuss the matter while in captivity. See *Conflicting Stories* for details.

Kasiyl suggests the Travellers leave Hwehalokharl in his custody on some obscure moon or other pirate hideaway while they head into the Hierate and make contact with Lokharl. Paranoid Travellers may prefer to put Hwehalokharl somewhere safer (or somewhere away from the vengeful Kasiyl) – they could, for example, call in a favour and have Hwehalokharl imprisoned in the gravity dungeons on the Floating Palace.

Now that they have Hwehalokharl, they can move onto the second phase of Kasiyl's plan.

THE SECOND PHASE

Kasiyl wants the *wye'oiheasarl,*to travel into the Hierate, find Lokharl, and force the old *earleatrais* to admit his ruling was wrong, and that Kasiyl should never have been exiled. Kasiyl tells the *wye'oiheasarl,*the following:

- Lokharl is likely somewhere on the planet Tlaiowaha. That really does not pin it down much – Tlaiowaha's population is in the billions – but he is a respected elder statesman. Finding him will not be that hard; threatening him will be trickier.
- Both Kasiyl's aunt Fyohierl and his sister Aual are in the Tlaiowaha system; his sister has better connections, but his aunt may be more willing to help. If pressed, Kasiyl admits it was his aunt who started the War of Assassins that led to Kasiyl's disgrace, and that the aunt lost considerable standing as a result of Kasiyl's actions.
- Once they have contacted Lokharl, they need to force him to confess his misdeeds. Kasiyl suggests amputating one of Hwehalokharl's dewclaws and taking it as proof. However, they need to avoid attracting the attention of the Aslan security forces – if Lokharl alerts the clan authorities that humans are threatening him, it will put the whole plan into jeopardy. Tlaiowaha is, obviously, a *Tlaiowaha* world and Lokharl is of the *Yerlyaruiwo*. The Aslan do not have a police force or security service in the same way human governments do – each clan takes care of its own. Therefore, Lokharl would either have to beg a favour from the *Tlaiowaha* or rely on whatever limited forces the *Yerlyaruiwo* have available on Tlaiowaha – either way, the odds are not overwhelming.
- Fortunately, Kasiyl knows the territory of Lokharl's elder son is precariously located on a world likely to be captured by another clan. The old man cannot afford to risk the loss of his other son. Kasiyl believes Lokharl will make a deal rather than sacrifice Hwehalokharl.
- The Travellers must also work out a way of ensuring their threats have bite – they need to put Lokharl under pressure. Kasiyl suggests a time limit – Hwehalokharl will be executed within, say, 8 weeks if Lokharl does not comply.
- Once the Travellers have Lokharl's confession, they must present it to the *Ahroay'if* clan elders on the world of Stoyhus, and have them lift Kasiyl's exile.
- Lokharl's recantation of his judgement will start the war between the *Ahroay'if* and the *Tokohfealr* once again – escalating it from a War of Assassins to a Strictly Limited War. Kasiyl asks that the adventurers stand ready to join in this war, as both clans will want it over and done with as quickly as possible, so having more combat-ready forces on hand will give Kasiyl the advantage.
- Once he has been restored to his place of honour at the right clan of the *Ahroay'ifko*, the clan leader, then Kasiyl will be able to reward his human allies from Drinax for their aid and hospitality.

Conflicting Stories

Both Kasiyl and Hwehalokharl agree that Lokharl was the *earleatrais* in the War of Assassins between the *Ahroay'if* and *Tokohfealr*, and that Kasiyl's killing of a rival noble is usually legal within the strictures of such a war. Kasiyl argues that any killing, regardless of method, is allowable under Aslan custom. Hwehalokharl says that Kasiyl's crime was overkill – he used a *wye'oiheasarl* plasma streamer, an Aslan weapon comparable to a PGMP. Such guns are supposed to be restricted to the battlefield, and not deployed in civilian areas.

Hwehalokharl does remember several nobles from the Yerlyaruiwo clan visiting his father during the deliberations, but that means nothing – his father was, at the time, a very important counsellor within the clan, and the Kasiyl case was not the only matter occupying his time.

PRISONER COMPLICATIONS

Roll 2D, applying the DMs noted below. On an 8+, the Travellers avoid a complication – if the roll fails, choose from the options listed or roll 1D. If the Travellers are not present to deal with the complication, the referee may choose to either determine the results himself, or have the Travellers play secondary characters.

DM+1	The Travellers find a very secure hiding place for Hwehalokharl
DM+2	Hwehalokharl is placed in suspended animation or similar restrictions
+Deception	The Travellers take pains to hide their movements
DM-1	The Travellers are an Irritant to the Aslan Hierate (as per the Standing rules)
DM-2	The Travellers are Infamous foes of the Aslan Hierate
DM-3	The Travellers are Enemies of the State in the eyes of the Aslan Hierate
DM-1	The Travellers leave Kasiyl in charge of watching over the prisoner
DM-1	Teirlas is in pursuit of the Travellers
DM-1	The Travellers have an Enemy or Rival who might cause trouble

1. **Escape:** Hwehalokharl manages to break out of his prison and escapes on board a stolen ship (jump-capable if one is available). Once he learns where he is, he tries to return to Hierate space as quickly as possible. If the Travellers or their agents cannot recapture him before he reaches the safety of the Hierate, their plan to pressure Lokharl is doomed.
2. **Rescue Attempt:** Teirlas (or another Aslan *ihatei*) attempts to storm the hiding place to rescue Hwehalokharl. If Teirlas is aware of the plot, then he arrives in his cruiser; otherwise, it is 1D 100-ton *ihateisho* raiders. If the Aslan can rescue Hwehalokharl, they carry him back to the Hierate.
3. **Kasiyl's Fury:** In a fit of anger, Kasiyl attacks Hwehalokharl. His frustration at his long exile boils over, and he takes his wrath out on Lokharl's son. Throw 2D; on 6+, Hwehalokharl is merely injured. Otherwise, he is mortally wounded and requires a Medic check to save his life.
4. **Pirate Raid:** A rival pirate attacks the hiding place. Choose a suitable pirate from those listed on page 137-144. Roll 2D; on an 8+, Hwehalokharl is captured.
5. **Sickness:** Hwehalokharl falls seriously ill – he needs an expert in Aslan biology or a TL13+ medical facility to make a recovery. Otherwise, he perishes in 6D weeks.
6. **Prince Harrick's Interference:** Prince Harrick of Drinax discovers that the pirates have kidnapped a member of the influential *Yerlyaruiwo* clan. The last time Drinax attracted the wrath of the Aslan, the *Ahroay'if* clan bombed Drinax from orbit and brought an end to the old Kingdom. This cannot be allowed to happen again – Prince Harrick demands the prisoner be released!

4. IN THE JAWS OF THE BEAST

The Tlaiowaha system; named after the clan that conquered it, in the heady years of the first expansion into the space across the Great Rift. The *Tlaiowaha* are one of the great clans, the *Tlaukhu*; they are the traders and merchants of the Aslan, the engine of the Aslan economy. If the *Yeryaruiwo* are keepers of Aslan honour, then the *Tlaiowaha* are keepers of the Aslan coffers.

Tlaiowaha is not their homeworld, but it is their stronghold.

The planet itself is a sun-scorched ball of hot rock, barely big enough to hold an atmosphere, but its wealth is in the constellation of moonlets and asteroids that orbit it. This is the Tlaiowaha Anchorage, the main Aslan base in this sector. It is operated by the *Tlaiowaha*, but they have arrangements with a dozen other clans to berth and maintain their warships here. There are uncounted thousands of ships here; enough to conquer every world from Drinax to Pax Rulin – enough to turn the whole Trojan Reach into ash.

A mere fraction of the Aslan's strength would be enough to shatter the Kingdom of Drinax once more.

Travelling past the fleets of ships, the countless cruisers and assault carriers and multi-thousand-ton capital ships – each one painted in the heraldry of a different clan, and decorated with calligraphic scrolls describing the history and glorious deeds of the captains – the Travellers are intercepted by Tlaiowaha System Defence Boats. Security is immensely tight here; if the Travellers resist, they are dead in space. If they are in an Aslan ship, or have up-to-date and verifable papers of passage from Tyokh (see *Ihatei!*), then they can get through customs without incident if they pass an Average (8+) Admin check (SOC) and are not carrying any contraband. Apply DM-1 if the Travellers' Standing with the Aslan is 0 to -5, and DM-2 if it is worse than -5.

If they are carrying illegal weapons or other items, then have a Traveller throw two dice; they need a 10+ to pass the check. Hidden storage compartments, creative sensor jamming and clever distractions grant DMs at the discretion of the referee.

If there are any problems with the Travellers' travel papers, cargo or weapons, or if they arouse suspicion in any way, they are diverted to a secure station orbiting Tlaiowaha for questioning by Aslan security. There are tales of unlucky human Travellers vanishing for months or even years if the Aslan are not satisfied by their stories.

Breaking the Law

The Aslan do not have police or security. They have clan agents. A clan agent is legally entitled to investigate and safeguard the affairs and interests of the clan. So, if a *Yerlyaruiwo* is robbed on a *Tlaiowaha* world, and is unable to deal with the problem himself, he would contact the local *Yerlyaruiwo* clan agent and have her handle the problem. Think of clan agents as a cross between private detectives, freelance police and mafia goons ('*these guys causing you trouble? You want me to rip their throats out?*'). On some planets, a clan might have thousands of clan agents on site, specialising in different types of problems. On others, a clan agent might visit once every few months, like a wandering sheriff.

If the Travellers break the law on Tlaiowaha, roll 2D and apply DMs as follows:

Travellers travelling under false identities: -1
Mild violence (non-lethal combat): +2
Minor property damage or theft: +0
Major property damage or theft: -2
Use of heavy weapons: -4
Attack on member of the *Tlaiowaha* clan: -2
Guide passing on information to relevant clan: -2

Results

If the result is a 6 or less, then the Travellers are targeted by a Clan Agent. The *Tlaiowaha*, as the dominant clan on the planet, can deploy overwhelming force if they wish (say, one Battle-Ready Clan Agent per Traveller). Other clans must rely on more subtle means – D3 Investigative Clan Agents.

If the result is 7-9, then the *Tlaiowaha* assume the situation is the result of human foolishness; instead of a clan agent, they assign a *Tlaiowaha* guide to the Travellers (replacing their existing guide, if any).

If the result is 10+, the crime passes without comment.

Piracy

Piracy here is absolute suicide. It is the most heavily trafficked naval base in the entire sector. If Travellers are stupid enough to try, they get targeted by spinal meson guns and fusion cannons immediately. They are toast.

BATTLE-READY CLAN AGENT

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Male	43

STR	11	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	10	EDU	8	Electronics (sensors) 2, Investigate 2, Gun Combat (energy) 3, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2
END	12	SOC	8	
EQUIPMENT				Aslan Battle Dress (+19, Grav Assist, Vislight Chameleon), Laser Rifle (5D+3)

INVESTIGATIVE CLAN AGENT

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Male	22

STR	9	INT	10	SKILLS
DEX	8	EDU	10	Advocate 1, Diplomat 1, Gun Combat (Slug) 1, Melee (natural) 1, Science (history) 2, Stealth 1, Tolerance 1
END	7	SOC	9	
EQUIPMENT				Combat Vacc Suit (9+), Autorifle (3D, Auto 2)

5. ACCESS TO THE ANCHORAGE

Docking space at the Anchorage is hotly contested; it costs an extortionate Cr10000 for a docking bay. Moving through the Anchorage is disconcerting for humans unused to Aslan environments. The artificial gravity pulses faintly, as though the whole asteroid has a heartbeat. Small animals – or maybe robots in meat suits – scurry through the artificial underbrush. Aslan love open expanses of territory, and every wall is covered by a hologram or view screen looking out over some alien savannah, making it seem that every structure, even the smallest, is bigger on the inside. The air smells of sweat and blood, and there is a constant underlying hum of violence, of threat. Humans describe it, correctly, as the feeling of being *prey.*

GUIDES

Once the Travellers land at the Anchorage, they are offered a choice of guides. Most human visitors to Aslan space rent an artificial intelligence agent or robot to advise them on the intricacies of Aslan custom and culture, but there are also plenty of Aslan 'interpreters', 'advisers', 'guides' and 'bodyguards'.

- AI or robot guides cost Cr2000 for the entirety of the Travellers' time in *Tlaiowaha* space, but are programmed to report anything suspicious to the *Tlaiowaha* clan. Disabling this protocol requires a Formidable (14) Electronics (computers) check (EDU); failure alerts the *Tlaiowaha* to the attempted tampering. Possession of such a guide machine indicates that the Traveller is a wealthy but inferior visitor and should be treated kindly, as one would deal with a child. Travellers do not need to roll on the Reaction Table (see *The Trojan Reach* page 32) when accompanied by a guide machine.
- Aslan guides range in cost from Cr25 to Cr250 per day; they have a Reaction Table DM of +0 to +4, and a cost of their DM + 1D x Cr50. Roll 2D on the Clan Guides table to see which clan the guide reports to.

Clan Guides

2-3: Minor or No Clan
4-5: *Ahroay'if*
5-8: *Tlaiowaha*
9: *Yerlyaruiwo*
10: *Tokohfealr*
11: *Syoisuis*
12: Roll again twice: the first time for the clan the guide pretends to be from, and the second for the clan the guide is really reporting to. Treat a re-roll of a 12 as No Clan the first time it happens, and *Syoisuis* the second time.

Guides gain DM+1 on the Reaction Table (see *The Trojan Reach* page 32) when dealing with representatives of their own clan.

No Guide

If the Travellers do not have a guide or interpreter with them, they have DM+0 on the Reaction Table.

6. FINDING LOKHARL

It is exceedingly difficult for the Travellers to find Lokharl on their own. As a distinguished diplomat, he values his privacy, and has no public presence on the TL14 equivalent of social media. The obvious route – and the one recommended by a reputable guide – is to contact the *Yerlyaruiwo* representatives who deal with business from outside the Hierate and ask them to arrange a meeting with Lokharl. Alternatively, the Travellers can make their own enquiries outside the usual channels, or go to one of Kasiyl's relatives and ask them for aid.

Through Clan Channels

A Very Difficult (12+) Diplomat check (SOC) coupled with a suitable explanation of why they need to speak with Lokharl gets the Travellers a meeting through the *Yerlyaruiwo* representatives. As part of this process, the *Yerlyaruiwo* carry out background checks on the Travellers, so apply DMs as follows:

-1: The Travellers do not have any Aslan among them
-2: The Travellers' Standing with the Hierate is 0 to -5
-4: The Travellers' Standing with the Hierate is -6 or less
-4: Tierlas has returned to Aslan space and knows the Travellers abducted Hwelokharl

If the result is 2-, the *Yerlyaruiwo* report the Travellers as spies to the dominant *Tlioawaha* clan – see *Breaking the Law* on page 208).

Through the Bureaucracy

If the Travellers cannot come up with a plausible reason why a bunch of suspicious 'free traders' from outside the Hierate would need to speak with an Aslan judge, their requests are channelled through the surreal realm of Aslan bureaucracy. The *Yerlyarui* agents stare at the Travellers suspiciously, then direct them down to the corridor. Paper-shuffling and mundane record-keeping is not suitable work for a noble Aslan warrior; in the past, it was done by slaves or captured aliens. In these more enlightened, modern times, it is done by robots and computers, but tradition dictates that certain records are kept on paper. So, the Travellers are shown to a vault where TL14 humanoid servitor robots consult leather-bound tomes and scrolls. A Difficult (10+) Admin check (EDU) is required to start the search; there is a 1-in-6 chance per week that the Travellers get an answer out of the bureaucratic system

Hitting the Streets

And the corridors. And the corridors that are holographically disguised as endless forests. And the floating cities overhead. There is not a lot of real land on Tliaowaha, but there is still a lot of ground to cover.

A Very Difficult (12+) Streetwise check (1D days, INT) lets the Travellers track Lokharl down through their own devices. Failure means the Travellers offend a group of Aslan (perhaps by trespassing into the wrong area, making enquiries in the wrong bar, asking the wrong questions, or just by being aliens). Roll 2D each for the number of Aslan and their average SOC, and once on the Clan table (see *The Trojan Reach* page 64) for their clan.

Socialising

A Very Difficult (12+) Carouse check (1D hours, SOC) gives the Traveller a chance to make a contact who knows Lokharl. After the test, roll 2D; on an 8+ and the test was successful, the Traveller gets an introduction. On a failure, or on a 7- on the second roll, the Traveller takes that much damage from potent Aslan liquor or bar brawls.

AUAL, KASIYL'S SISTER

Aual is one of the *Ahroay'if* representatives to the *Ya'soisthea*, the interclan body that dominates Aslan politics coreward of the Great Rift. She is a member of the New Horizon faction of the clan, a group that believe that the *Ahroay'if's* – and the *Ya'soisthea's* – future lies in trade with the Imperium. She wears human-style clothing, and speaks excellent Galanglic. She even eats human-style, preferring dead meat as opposed to live (or psuedo-live) prey.

Invoking Kasiyl's name gets the Travellers a meeting with her, but she is not sympathetic to her brother's cause. Her brother has always been a troublemaker, unwilling to listen to the wisdom of the clan elders. He came under the influence of their aunt Fyohierl at an impressionable age, which is never a good thing. Worse, he associated with the *Syoisuis*, the clan of spies, assassins and conspirators, and thought himself cleverer than everyone else. Now look at him – a beggar living in the ruins of a world devastated by his own ancestors!

She meets the Travellers on board a *Ahroay'if* courier vessel docked at the Anchorage, where she can trust the crew and ensure she is not being spied upon. Aual urges the Travellers to return to Kasiyl and tell him to release Hwelokharl, to avoid destabilising relations between the clans. However, good roleplaying (playing on her loyalty

and love for her brother) coupled with a successful Persuade check, convinces her to put the Travellers in touch with Lokharl. She insists that if they are foolish enough to go ahead with Kasiyl's idiotic scheme, they should go straight to the clan council on Stohyus (Ranib/0805) after speaking to Lokharl and consult with the *Ahroay'ifko*, the head of the clan himself. They should not presume to meddle in Aslan affairs more than they already have.

FYOHIERL, KASIYL'S AUNT

Fyohierl lives and works on Tliaowaha; she is, according to the sign on her door, the Undersecretary for Customs Traffic Operations. Her cramped office looks more like a junkshop than anything else; unlike every other room the Travellers visit on Tliaowaha, she does not have holographic screens to give the impression of open terrain. It is a spacer's room.

On the wall behind her desk is a painting of an Aslan fleet bombing a planet from orbit; this depicts the *Ahroay'if* fleet bombing Drinax and putting an end to the old Kingdom. Most of the other decorations are prizes from Fyoheirl's time as a pirate. Alarmingly, there is an ornate human skull inlaid with gold that she uses as a paperweight on her desk.

Fyoheirl was once a fearsome pirate – 'privateer', she insists, laughing as she pours the Travellers drinks (even if they have not explained why they are here, they are more interesting than traffic policy meetings). The *Ahroay'if* used to be great warriors, feared across the Trojan Reach, but they have gotten soft and fat in recent generations. Too much trading, not enough fighting. She saw the *Tokohfearl* clan were vulnerable, and started a war to steal territory from them. As an unmarried female, she could not own territory of her own, so recruited her young nephew Kasiyl to take the lead. It ended badly for both – Kasiyl was exiled, and she was grounded in this dead-end job.

Fyoheirl's politics is the opposite of her niece – she is part of the Ascendency faction, who want the *Ahroay'if* to escape the shadow of their patron clan, the *Tlaiowaha*, and to rise to become part of the *Tlaukhu* back in the Hierate. To achieve that aim, the *Ahroay'if* would have to conquer more territory and win influence through combat, not trade. Most of the other members of the Ascendancy faction are elderly male landowners and traditionalist scholars; Fyoheirl just likes fighting.

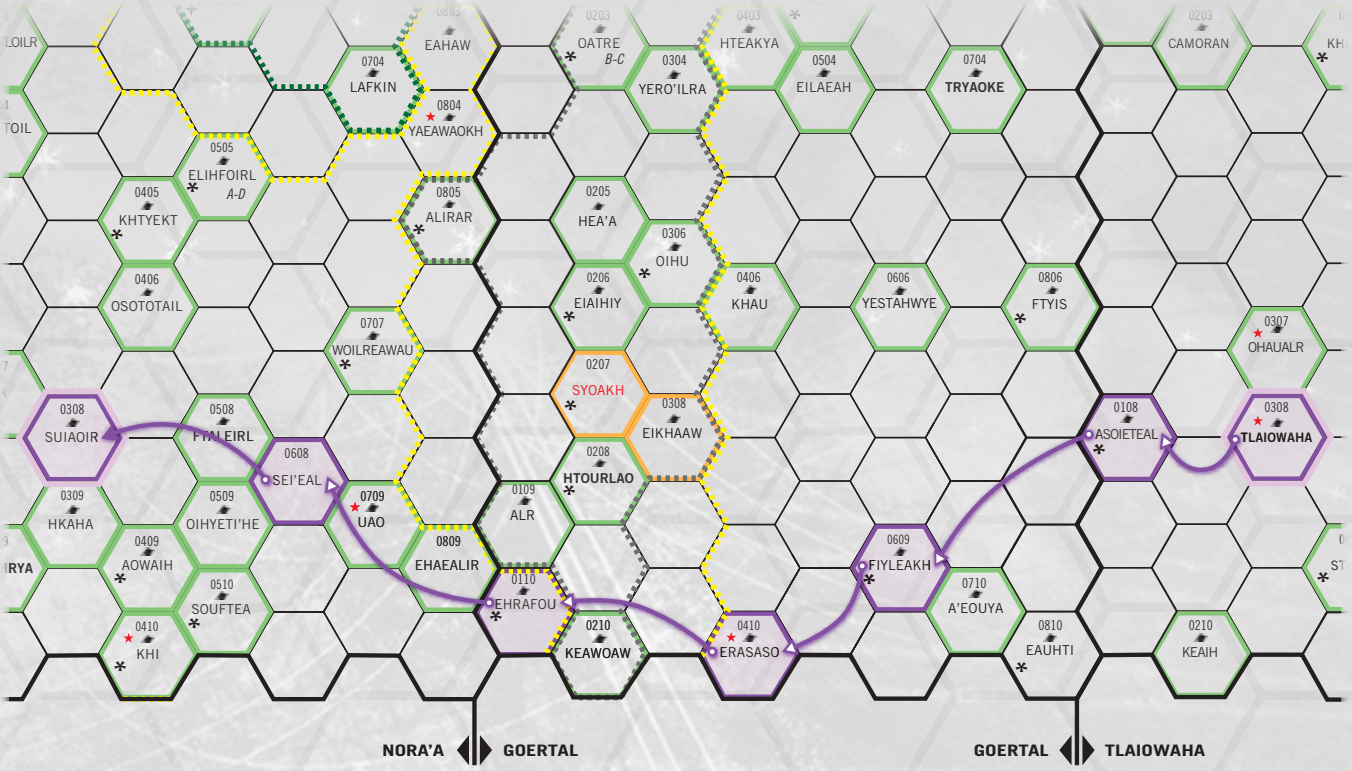
When asked about Lokharl, she snarls in anger – she is still furious at her nephew for using a 'giant star-spitting plasma death ray' when an assassin's blade would have been more appropriate, but she hates Lokharl all the more for declaring her war was over on a technicality. However, she does not know where Lokharl is on Tlaiowaha ('they keep him away from me so I don't rip his throat out') and suggests the Travellers try Aual.

However, if they have already tried that approach, she has a backup solution. As Undersecretary for Customs Traffic Operations, she can access the travel schedules of various Aslan dignitaries – and knows Lokharl is due to visit a conference on Suiaoir (Nora'a/0308) on board a *Ktiyhui*-class courier. If the Travellers were to intercept the courier and take Lokharl alive, they could force him to confess. Fyoheirl does not recommend that route – it will *really* annoy the *Yerlyaruiwo*, and she would have to turn Outcast so they do not arrest her for giving confidential travel data to alien pirates – but if there are no other options, she is willing to risk it.

She also says that if the Travellers can get Lokharl's confession, they should not waste time bringing it to Stoyhus and the clan elders – they should head straight to Hkakh (Ranib/0807) and reopen hostilities there. If they are willing do this, she will assemble a fighting force and rendezvous with them.

Intercepting the Courier

Lokharl's courier ship goes Tlaiowaha->Asoieteal->Fiyleakh (Goertal subsector)->Erasaso->Ehrafou->Sei'eal (Nora'a subsector)->Suiaoir, staying in Aslan space throughout. If the Aslan are already hunting the Travellers, then they need to dodge their own pursuers while chasing Lokharl. Otherwise, they face minimal resistance from Lokharl's crew and bodyguards. Fyoheirl's data contains not only Lokharl's planned route, but also security patrol schedules making the attack exceptionally easy.



7. A VISIT FROM THE SHADOWS

At some point while the Travellers are searching for Lokharl, they are approached by two Aslan, a male and a female, both of whom wear ornate robes over skintight armour – anyone familiar with Aslan military technology recognises the armour as *soisu'hru* - assassin's garb. The two introduce themselves as Tye and Yekh (Star and Void) and are representatives from the secretive *Syoisuis* clan, a clan of spymasters and assassins technically allied with the *Yerlyaruiwo*.

If the Travellers are voyaging under assumed names or false papers, the Aslan hint that they know exactly who they are talking to. They do not, however, wish to threaten or antagonise the Travellers – instead, they are simply curious. What are the Travellers looking for in Aslan space? What does it have to do with the outcast Kasiyl? Why, he has not been seen in the Hierate since that shameful War of Assassins between the *Ahroay'if* and *Tokohfealr*...

The *Syoisuis* thrive on conflict and intrigue – they will help the Travellers find Lokharl, and promise to help restore Kasiyl if the Travellers bring them Lokharl's confession first. They also offer the gratitude and assistance of their clan in navigating the treacherous maze of Aslan politics. 'We are good friends to have,' says Tye, 'especially when no-one else knows we are your friends.'

LOKHARL

As befitting a *Yerlyaruiwo* dignitary of some importance, Lokharl lives on the grounds of a high-security palace. His apartments are in an obscure wing of the fortress, so while the security is tight, it is far from overwhelming. Obviously, visitors to the fortress are not permitted to bring weapons or armour apart from ceremonial weapons like *hi'asoi* ('monkey-blades', worn by humans integrated into Aslan society as a replacement for dewclaws). Sneaking a weapon past the automated scanners requires a Difficult (10+) Deception or Electronics (sensors) check (INT); failure counts as *Breaking The Law* (see page 208).

If the Travellers locate Lokharl through official channels, then they are escorted past security and straight into his apartments. However, Lokharl is not alone; also attending the meeting are a *Yerlyaruiwo* 'handler' named Yohorlor and one heavily armoured Aslan bodyguard per two Travellers. Yohorlor tries to ensure that Lokharl does not discuss the incident involving Kasiyl; the Travellers can still extract a confession by distracting or threatening to kill Hwelokharl.

If the Travellers locate Lokharl through unofficial channels, then they need to sneak or bypass the fortress's security with a Difficult (10+) Stealth check (DEX) or Deception check (SOC). Lokharl will beaccompanied only by a servant and his nursemaid.

Lokharl's apartments are musty and cramped; like Fyoheirl's, it is full of mementoes of his old career, but Lokharl seems almost mummified. There are no electronic devices or computers in his rooms other than a few bits of medical equipment; he talks and acts like an Aslan from the days before spaceflight, as though he has retreated into the past.

TALKING TO LOKHARL

Lokharl dislikes humans, and makes his distaste clear – he only speaks *trokh*, the Aslan language, and growls if the Travellers use translator devices. His nurse or handler can translate if the Travellers do not speak *trokh.*

If asked about Kasiyl, he shrugs and claims he cannot recall the incident. If prompted, or given time to consult his records, he remembers the war between the *Ahroay'if* and the *Tokolfhears.* His opinions of the two clans involved are equally dismissive. The *Ahroay'if* are '*fat merchants – they used to be good warriors, but the only warriors left in their ranks are idiots'*, while the *Tokolfhears* are '*dirt-grubbing vagabonds who deserve to get their territory taken by the more deserving'*.

He eventually remembers Kasiyl as '*the idiot who used a* wye'oiheasarl *in a War of Assassins'*, and laughs scornfully. It was, he says, an easy decision. He understands that it put an end to the *Ahroay'if's* military ambitions, but if they were going to use inappropriate weapons at the War of Assassins level, then doubtless they would use equally inappropriate tactics at other levels of warfare. War for the Aslan is a form of art, of culture. Humans, Lokharl understands, think that fencing and duelling are refined, cultured forms of violence, where brute impulses are reified into something more. The Aslan do this for all forms of violence. Why, if *humans* had bombed Drinax from orbit, it would have been nothing more than a blind convulsion of hateful destruction. When the Aslan did it, though, they did it with grace and artistry, turning nuclear annihilation into poetry.

LOKHARL'S CONFESSION

To extract a confession from Lokharl, the Travellers need to tell him Kasiyl is holding Hwehalokharl, and that the boy will be killed if Lokharl does not admit he was wrong and reverse the judgement that led to Kasiyl's exile. Optionally, a Routine (6+) Persuade check (SOC) may be needed if the Travellers have given Lokharl reason to underestimate them. If they wish to force a confession from Lokharl without alarming the handlers – say, by dropping subtle hints about Teirlas' retinue – then it will be a Difficult (10+) Deception check (SOC).

In his confession, Lokharl admits he was ordered to ruin Kasiyl and the *Ahroay'if's* territorial war against the *Tokohfealr*, and that those orders came from his superiors in the *Yerlyaruiwo* clan. He does not know why his superiors wished to bend the ancient rules of honour to sabotage the *Ahroay'if*, but he believes it has the stink of *Ya'soisthea* politics. These stars of the Trojan Reach, he complains, are pestilent and vile, and contribute to the moral decay of the Aslan.

If the Travellers have no recording devices with them, then Lokharl writes his confession on a scroll, and seals it with his *eaiasu'ikh,* his soul-shield or ceremonial seal. To Aslan eyes, such a document carries as much weight as Lokharl's own voice.

THE NEXT STEP

Once the Travellers have Lokharl's confession, they need to decide what to do with it – which clan do they approach?

- Kasiyl's original plan called for them to bring the confession to the *Ahroay'if* leaders on the golden world of Stohyus (Ranib/0805).
- More ambitiously, Fyoheirl wants the Travellers to bring the confession to Hkakh (Ranib/0807) so she can restart her war of conquest.
- Aual wants the Travellers to return to Kasiyl and convince him to give up his quest for redemption. That means jumping back to whatever out-of-the-way system the Travellers stashed Hwehalokharl.

Other options can all be followed right here on Tlaiowaha.

- The *Syoisuis* may have offered to help the Travellers in exchange for early access to the confession.
- More ambitious Travellers could try to cut a deal with the *Yerlyaruiwo* or the *Tlaiowaha*.

Is this *Earleatrais*-Gate?

Travellers unfamiliar with Aslan culture may wonder exactly how damaging Lokharl's confession is. He certainly broke his sacred oath as an *earleatrais*, the ceremonial referees in Aslan warfare. While the *earleatrais* is supposed to be utterly neutral and incorruptible, that is rarely the case. Every time one side loses a conflict, someone blames the referee. Sometimes, the *earleatrais* show blatant favouritism, or are simply incompetent. A *Yerlyariowo earleatrais* should be much better than the average, but the real scandal here is not Lokharl bending the rules – it is that he was *ordered* to bend the rules by his clan superiors.

Is it a minor scandal, or is this going to shatter the entire Hierate and bring down the clans?

It is somewhere in the middle. Certainly, it is embarrassing to the *Yerlyaruiwo*, whose reputation is founded on being the keepers of Aslan honour. Their centre of power is back in the Hierate proper, though, so they can brush off the scandal as a mistake made by a minor branch of their clan.

The confession will certainly restart the war between the *Ahroay'if* and the *Tokohfealr*.

At a rough guess, a clan would pay at least MCr500 to keep such a scandal from seeing the light of day.

If the Travellers guess correctly that it was the *Tlaiowaha* that bribed the *Yerlyaruiwo* to rule against the *Tlaiowaha's* own vassals, that is far more damaging. It is an unforgivable breach, and if revealed will shatter the alliance between the two clans. The *Ahroay'if* will have to return to their more warlike ways; the *Tlaiowaha* will lose access to the critical dust-spice trade route and be plunged into recession. Stopping that is worth far, far more.

More than enough to kill for…

8. THE YERLYARUIWO RESPONSE

One does not simply threaten a member of the *Yerlyaruiwo* and expect to get away with it. Soon after the Travellers extract a confession from Lokharl, the *Yerlyaruiwo* dispatch a team of clan agents to recover the confession and punish them.

Roll 2D on the Clan Agent Reaction table to determine how long it takes the Aslan to respond, applying DMs as follows. Clan Agents can be found on page 217.

-2	Teirlas warned the *Yerlyaruiwo* about the Travellers
-2	The Travellers have a *Yerlyaruiwo* guide
-1	The Travellers went through the *Yerlyaruiwo* bureaucracy
-3	The Travellers have already caused trouble on Tlaiowaha
-1	Lokharl is able to alert the authorities within 24 hours
-2	Lokharl is able to alert the authorities within 2 hours
-4	Lokharl is able to alert the authorities immediately
+2	Lokharl is forced to mislead the authorities
+X	highest rank of Deception among Travellers
+1 - +4	depending on the degree of preparation and misdirection employed by the Travellers

Clan Agent Reaction

Result	Reaction
1 or less	Battle-Ready Clan Agents
2-5	Battle-Ready Clan Agents arrive within 2D minutes, pursue Travellers
6-8	Investigative Clan Agents arrive within an hour, investigate case
9-11	Investigative Clan Agents arrive within 8 hours, investigate case
12+	No reaction (apparently, you *can* threaten a member of the *Yerlyaruiwo* and get away with it)

COMBAT

Clan Agents are adept at minimising collateral damage – even a Battle-Ready Agent in full battle dress prefers to use a comparatively weak (but accurate) hunting rifle in most situations, or close to melee range to use a blade to deliver justice. If the Travellers are packing heavy weapons, though, the Clan Agents can break out laser rifles or even gravity spears.

The Clan Agents attempt to take the Travellers alive; prisoners are brought before the *Yerlyaruiwo* elders (see page 220).

INVESTIGATION

If the Travellers escape with a head start, then roll 2D – the best Deception among the Travellers every day. On an 8+, the investigators are on their trail and gain DM+2 to future rolls to find the Travellers; they also learn whether or not the Travellers are still on Tlaiowaha or have left the system. On a 10+, they have found them and arrive in force (Battle Ready Clan Agents if the Travellers are still on Tlaiowaha or another *Yerlyaruiwo*-friendly world; Investigative Agents if they track them down elsewhere).

Describe how the Travellers feel pursued and hunted by the Aslan; every customs check or starport landing becomes fraught with paranoia.

PURSUIT THROUGH SPACE

If the Travellers are en route to another planet, then the *Yerlyaruiwo* pursue. The clan allocates a trio of 800-ton *Ekawisykua*-class escorts to carry out the search; if Teirlas is also hunting for the Travellers, add his ships to the mix. The escorts pursue the Travellers from Tlaiowaha (or from wherever the Travellers intercepted Lokharl's courier), splitting up only if there are multiple potential systems to search. They may be able call on additional *Yerlyaruiwo* ships in other systems – roll 2D, adding +2 if there is a *Tlaukhu* naval base in the system and +2 if the government code is H, L or N; on 6+, add D3 *ihateisho* 100-ton scouts, and on a 10+, add a 1,000-ton cruiser.

If the Aslan intercept the Travellers, they demand that they surrender and accompany them to the *Yerlyaruiwo* stronghold on Iysewekh (Ranib/0610). Refusal is met with lethal force.

APPROACHING THE CLANS

Let us talk about the delicate balance of the clans, before the Travellers blunder in and mess it all up.

The *Tlaiowaha* are rich traders, but most of their holdings are back across the Great Rift. In the Trojan Reach, they rely on their vassals, the *Ahroay'if*, to defend their trade routes and manage their affairs.

The *Ahroay'if* were once noted warriors – they are the clan that destroyed the old Kingdom of Drinax – but in recent centuries they have become traders and vassals to the *Tlaiowaha*. They get more wealth from trade than they did from conquest, which is just what the *Tlaiowaha* want. Stability is good for business.

When Kasiyl and his aunt Ftoyierl launched their war with the *Tokolfeahr*, it threatened to disrupt the *Tlioawaha's* arrangements with the *Ahroay'if*. War brings instability, and instability endangers trade routes. However, the *Tlioawaha* decided they could not risk simply *ordering* their vassals to give up the chance to conquer – conquest is a birthright of every Aslan male. Instead, they arranged for the war to fail disastrously, undermining their own vassals. They bribed the *Yerlyariowo* to order Lokharl to find an excuse to rule against the *Ahroay'if*.

Kasiyl's fate was sealed not because he was impulsive or dishonourable, but because merchants hundreds of parsecs away feared that if the *Ahroay'if* tasted victory, they would hunger for more.

AHROAY'IF

The world of Stohyus (Ranib/0805) is one of the richest worlds in all Charted Space, a planet of fabulous natural beauty and wealth. Few outsiders are ever allowed land on this golden world. The leader of the *Ahroay'if* clan, the *Ahroay'ifko*, rules his domain from a magnificent floating palace that glides through the glittering skies like a pleasure-barge cutting through a sea of diamonds.

The comparisons to Drinax – before an ancestor of this very *Ahroay'ifko* blasted the planet from orbit – cannot be understated. Here is another outpost of culture and wealth amid the barbarity of the Trojan Reach.

The Travellers must decide whether they wish to present Lokharl's confession publicly, to the clan council, or privately to the *Ahroay'ifko* himself. Aual, if she is with the Travellers, urges them to act openly at all times.

The *Syiosuis*

If the Travellers go to the spymaster clan, Tye and Yekh ask what they want out of this situation. Is restoring Kasiyl's honour all that matters to them, or are they more interested in leveraging this treasure for some other reward – like restoring the Kingdom of Drinax?

If all the Travellers want is to restore Kasiyl's honour, then the *Syiosuis* offer to approach the *Yerlyaruiwo* on their behalf. The spymasters can arrange for the *Yerlyaruiwo* to restore Kasiyl's honour without reopening the war between the *Ahroay'if* and *Tokolfeahr*. All they need to do is stage a duel to the death between Kasiyl and Hwehalokharl. The duel can be as fixed or one-sided as the Travellers wish. Without his son's territory to support him, Lokharl's reputation will no longer matter, and the *Yerlyaruiwo* can discard him without any repercussions.

If the Travellers want help for Drinax, then the *Syiosuis* can arrange that too. They can approach the *Ahroay'if* and convince them to restart the war. They will even send ships to help Fyoheirl, ensuring that her war on Hkakh is a successful one. Drinax will gain the *Ahroay'if* as allies, the *Yerlyarui's* reputation will be undamaged, and the *Tlaiowaha* will be weakened. Everybody wins – but for this to work, then Kasiyl must be silenced forever. The *Syiosuis* will leave that task in the hands of the Travellers …

Going Public

The Travellers may not be aware of this, but *Ahroay'if* politics are divided between two factions – the aggressive, expansionist Ascendency faction, and the conciliatory, trade-orientated New Horizon. The Ascendants supported the war against the *Tokolfeahr*, and lost much of their influence when Kasiyl was exiled. Now, many of the New Horizon members have moved to the Tlaiowaha system and other worlds closer to the trade routes, leaving the Ascendants in control of the clan's ceremonial court, but bereft of wealth or power.

That means the Travellers get a very warm response from the court, and are treated as heroes for bringing proof of the *Yerlyaruiwo's* perfidy – but they do not actually have the ability to take action. The Ascendants control very few ships or warriors. To get access to the clan's military, the Travellers must persuade the *Ahroay'ifko* himself.

In Private

The Travellers are ushered into the private chambers of the *Ahroay'ifko*. He is an immensely old and frail Aslan male, surrounded by medical robots and life support machinery. A Very Difficult (12) Medic check (1D seconds, EDU) recognises his condition as a degenerative genetic condition caused by exposure to a fungus that grows on several worlds in the Trojan Reach. The Drinaxians long ago developed a treatment for the condition – the Travellers can offer that cure as leverage or trade.

The *Ahroay'ifko* explains that he already knows the *Yerlyaruiwo* were bribed by his allies, the *Tlaiowaha* – he had no proof of this up until now, but he guessed it was so. His instinct, though, is to do nothing. The clan has chosen its path. They are to be traders, not conquerors. The fire in his soul has gone out, and he wants nothing more than to maintain the status quo.

He asks that the Travellers destroy Lokharl's confession, free Hwehalokharl, and ensure Kasiyl finds a better life outside the Hierate. As compensation for their efforts so far, he offers them MCr100 or a used *Ekawsiykua*-class Escort (roll three times on the Spacecraft Quirks table on page 164 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*).

A successful Very Difficult (12+) Persuade check (SOC) can change the *Ahroay'ifko's* mind (DM+2 if the Travellers have already garnered the support of the court by presenting their evidence publicly, DM+4 if they offer him a cure for his condition). If they convince him to put the clan's military under Ascendency control, then the war is back on and Kasiyl can return in triumph.

Alternatively, they can trigger a civil war in the *Ahroay'if* by revealing the *Ahroay'ifko's* weakness and complicity. Kasiyl can return in this case too, but he comes home to a golden world scarred by burning cities and spilled blood.

9. RESTARTING THE WAR

If the Travellers head to Hkakh (Ranib/0807), they meet Fyoheirl there. She has assembled a small fleet of former pirates, mercenaries and militant clan members who are willing to restart the war of conquest as soon as the Travellers arrive with the necessary paperwork. To present the clan with a *fait accompli* and ensure full support, she needs to seize the planet immediately once the conflict begins again. For that to work, she needs to cut communications.

There are two Aslan vessels about to depart Hkakh – a 200-ton *Ileliy*-class messenger and a 600-ton *Owatarl*-class tender. She needs the Travellers to intercept and disable both ships so they cannot carry news of the invasion to the rest of the *Tokolfeahr* clan. If the Travellers take out both ships before they jump, the invasion goes off without a hitch and the *Ahroay'if* conquer Hkakh, reinvigorating the Ascendency faction and redeeming Kasiyl. If they only disable one ship, then have the Travellers throw 2D; on a 9+, the *Tokolfeahr* are able to respond in time and reinforcements arrive to give them the victory. If the Travellers fail to disable both ships, then the *Tokolfeahr* win on a 5+.

If the *Ahroay'if* win, then both Kasiyl and Fyoheirl ascend to positions of influence and importance in the clan hierarchy, and owe the Travellers a considerable favour.

If the *Tokolfeahr* win, then it is still a partial victory for the Travellers, as Kasiyl is still redeemed.

YERLYARUIWO

The *Yerlyaruiwo* homeworlds are far away across the Rift, but the Travellers can approach the local clan elders on Tlaiowaha and negotiate with them. The *Yerlyaruiwo* are likely already furious with the Travellers, but they will pay to make the problem go away. They will purchase Lokharl's testimony – and the Travellers' silence – for MCr150 and Hwehalokharl's safe return. If the Travellers throw in Kasiyl's head, the payment rises to a staggering MCr200. Negotiation is not an option – Aslan do not quibble with outsiders.

There is a downside – the Travellers are now forever barred from Aslan space, and will be targeted by *Yerlyaruiwo* assassins (see *Ihatei!*) if they dare enter the Hierate again. The *Yerlyaruiwo* will forever be enemies of the Travellers, and this will have drawbacks later in the campaign.

Travellers who approach the *Yerlyaruiwo* in a conciliatory fashion, with plenty of Diplomat checks, can claim they were only helping the honourable clan avoid a misunderstanding, and can get the payment without incurring their rancour.

TLAIOWAHA

The *Tlaiowaha* have the most to lose in this affair – they need the *Ahroay'if* clan to remain stable and secure their trade routes. If the Travellers approach the *Tlaiowaha* with Lokharl's testimony, then the wealthy clan offers MCr300 for the Travellers' silence. They will permit Kasiyl to live, so long he never returns to the Hierate. The Travellers may actually be able to negotiate for a higher price…

Alternatively, the Travellers may blackmail the *Tlaiowaha*, holding the testimony in reserve. The *Tlaiowaha* are arguably the most influential clan in the Trojan Reach, and certainly have the most influence in this subsector. Having leverage over them could be very useful in the future.

TOKOLFEAHR

The minor *Tokolfeahr* clan have little to offer the Travellers, compared to the politically powerful *Yerlyaruiwo* or wealthy *Tlaiowaha*. The one advantage the *Tokolfeahr* offer is that they are not enmeshed in Aslan politics. That is why the *Ahroay'if* picked on them, and why they can give Drinax direct support, unencumbered by clan ties and debts. If the Travellers contact the *Tokolfearh* and offer them Lokharl's testimony, then in future, whenever the Travellers visit an Aslan port, roll 2D on the *Tokolfeahr* Agent table to determine the port's temporary status.

Tokolfeahr Agent

	Government Type						
2D	G	H	J	K	L	M	N
2-5	Unfriendly	Unfriendly	Unfriendly	Unfriendly	Unfriendly	Unfriendly	Unfriendly
6-8	Unfriendly	Tolerant	Unfriendly	Unfriendly	Unfriendly	Tolerant	Neutral
9-11	Tolerant	Friendly	Unfriendly	Neutral	Unfriendly	Friendly	Tolerant
12+	Haven	Haven	Neutral	Tolerant	Neutral	Haven	Friendly

DMs:
+1 if Population is 6+
-1 if Law Level is 6+

A STONE IN THE WATER

Once the *Tokolfeahr* Agent have made their decision about Lokharl's testimony, all that remains is for them to return to whatever backwater system or isolated asteroid where Kasiyl is waiting.

Are they coming back to restore his honour, or murder him?

Kasiyl's fate – and the decisions the Travellers make – have repercussions beyond this one Aslan outcast. The results will not be felt on Drinax until later in the campaign (in *Finale*), but the stone has been thrown into the waters of the Hierate. In months to come, the Travellers may need friends inside the Hierate. Have they made any?

Note which clans benefited from the Travellers' actions, and which now consider them to be enemies, and consult the Clan Standings table to determine the adjustment, if any, to the Travellers' Standing with the Hierate. Keep track of the individual results too, as they will factor into *Finale.*

If a clan was unaffected by the Travellers' actions, use the neutral column. Some clans have situation-specific modifiers.

Clan Standings

	Attitude to Travellers		
Clan	**Grateful**	**Neutral**	**Vengeful**
Ahroay'if	+2	+0	-4
Tlaiowaha	+4	+0	-10
Yerlyaruiwo	+2	+0	-8
Syiosuis	+2	+0	-6
Tokolfeahr	+0	+0	-2
Situations			
Ahroay'ifko treated with Drinaxi cure	+4		
Kasiyl Restored	+2		
Hwehalokharl Killed	-4		
Per serious crime in Aslan space	-2		

C H A P T E R - T W E L V E

BLOOD OF THE STAR DRAGON

Prince Harrick's injuries are considerable... severe damage to all internal organs, 100% burns, exposure to radiation and toxic chemicals from breached shuttle drive... It is both miraculous and a testament to his strength that he is still alive...

It will take all our art and skill to restore him. Even his brain must be rebuilt, the damaged sections carefully excised and repaired with synthetic neurons and cybernetics. Every cell must be individually examined and repaired, or we risk cascading cancerous growths when the time comes to begin the regeneration process. We can restore him, my lord, but it will be a very slow process. I estimate at least ten years before we can remove him from suspended animation.

To be perfectly honest, o King, when the Prince first arrived at the Scholar's Tower, I assumed he was dead. I have never seen such ghastly injuries. It was only when we fitted a neural activity scanner to his capsule that we detected rudimentary brain activity even in suspended animation.

Your son sleeps, o King. He sleeps, and he dreams.

- Private communication between Scholar Voha and King Oleb

This adventure takes place in the Tliowaha subsector and begins on Drinax.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

When this campaign began, the Kingdom of Drinax was a joke – an absurd flying palace floating aimlessly through the skies of a bombed-out world. Its one glorious conquest was Asim, a planet of low-tech farmers. Now, with the aid of the Travellers, it is about to reclaim something of its former glory.

But the Kingdom hangs by a very narrow thread indeed. Virtually everyone on the Floating Palace is a second- or-third cousin of the royal line. Everyone has some claim to the throne. For centuries, that throne was a meaningless honour, but as Drinax's power grows, so too does the value of the Dragon Throne – that monstrous chair, forged from three thousand years of defeated spaceships. The existence of the royal line keeps Drinax from falling into anarchy and civil war. So long as King Oleb sits on the throne, his reign is unquestioned.

The King has two prospective heirs. Prince Harrick was once the heir, but he was terribly wounded decades ago, and spent twenty years in suspended animation as the palace's scientists rebuilt him, cell by cell. Princess Rao is the heir-presumptive; she spends more time actually ruling Drinax than her father does.

What happens when all three suddenly vanish?

The King's grav-belt fails, and he crashes into the radiation-scarred wilderness. At the same time, Prince Harrick leaves on a mysterious mission to Asim, and Princess Rao simply disappears. After helping rescue the mortally wounded King, the Travellers must find the missing princess. The evidence points to her brother Harrick – and with the Floating Palace in chaos, the Travellers must choose their sides in a mounting palace coup.

Once Drinax is secure, the Travellers follow Harrick's trail to Asim, where they must find the wayward prince. Once they track him down, he claims his sister is in the thrall of the Zhodani, and that he needs their help in stopping them from turning Drinax into a puppet of their designs against the Imperium.

EXISTING LOYALTIES

If the Travellers have already established relationships with one of the two prospective Drinaxian heirs, then this adventure may unfold somewhat differently. Instead of choosing which of the two is the more suitable heir, their task may be to cement their existing alliances. If the Travellers are especially close to Prince Harrick, then consider playing the adventure so Harrick asks them to help seize the Floating Palace and then meet him at Asim; if they have already pledged themselves to Princess Rao, then perhaps they already know about her Zhodani allies.

It is also possible, of course, that your Travellers' loyalties to Drinax are weak or even non-existent. Maybe they took the *Harrier* in the first adventure and have not looked back since. You can still run this adventure for them – it becomes their chance to seize the Floating Palace for themselves and gain control over the Kingdom!

1. THE LOST KING

Ever since the *Ahroay'if* bombed Drinax from orbit, the planet's weather has been temperamental. Huge dust-storms in the upper atmosphere cause sudden temperature drops, resulting in fierce flash storms below. Regions once covered in thick forests are now empty desert, with nothing to catch rain or slow winds. These flash storms are spasms of atmospheric violence, tearing the skies with gale-force winds and rain like icy spears. The mighty Floating Palace is strong enough to withstand even the wildest hurricane; below, the Vespexers who still eke a living from the blasted soil know to take shelter.

Only a fool goes walking in the teeth of a flash storm.

Only a madman goes flying in one.

King Oleb and six of his Hawk Warriors flew out from the Floating Palace two days ago, on one of the king's impetuous hunting trips (there are no animals worth hunting left on Drinax, so he has them imported from offworld). Now, the palace has received a distress call from the hunting party – the king's grav belts malfunctioned, and his bodyguards lost sight of him in the storm. They *think* he spiralled down into a region called the Pillars of Night, but cannot be sure. The Pillar region is awash with electromagnetic interference that blocks sensors, so they need all the help they can get finding the king.

Every ship and shuttle that can be launched without causing a panic leaves the Floating Palace and flies towards the Pillars of Night.

THE PILLARS OF NIGHT

The Pillars are all that remain of one of the great cities of Drinax. Millions of people once crowded into TL15 arcologies that reached towards the sky like artificial mountains. When the Aslan bombed the cities with ortillery, the massive bonded superdense support struts and frames of the arcologies survived, now sheathed in the melted and bubbled remains of the rest. The Pillars resemble the fingers of a blackened corpse, reaching towards the burnt skies above. There are thousands of them, rising from the wreckage below at random angles. The strong ferromagnetic content of the Pillars makes the place a huge field of lightning rods – a bolt might jump between a dozen pillars before it finds its way to earth. The Pillars make navigation of all kinds difficult, and jam sensors.

They are, however, great to fly through if you are in a wing-harness like the Hawk Warriors.

INTERROGATING THE HAWK WARRIORS

The commander of the Hawk Warriors bodyguard squad is Brie Tollar; she has been King Oleb's chief bodyguard for several years, and is well used to the king's eccentricities. Now, though, she is genuinely worried. This is not one of Oleb's pranks, where he will show up in a week's time with a hangover the size of a megafreighter. She heard the king's last distress call over their short-wave comm, and Oleb was not in control.

The Hawk Wing was scattered over nearly fifty kilometres of territory as they searched the Pillars for the hunt's quarry – an imported Fungal Vole from Burgess (0702/ Hkea'as). This exceedingly dangerous lifeform was released into the Pillars a month ago so the king could hunt it. From a distance. With a gauss rifle. From the air. For that is the only safe way to hunt a Fungal Vole.

Another Hawk Warrior from the squad went missing at the same time as King Oleb, a strapping young chap named Hurgon. He may have fallen victim to the same misfortune as the king, or…

ACCIDENT OR DESIGN?

What happened to King Oleb? Did all three of his grav-belts fail simultaneously, or was he the victim of treachery? That is up to the referee, and it is not a question that needs to be answered immediately. You can delay the revelation until later in the adventure, or leave it as a lingering mystery. Let us run through the potential suspects:

- **Misfortune:** No-one needs to be responsible for the king's doom. His grav-belts were century-old heirlooms. It is a wonder the Floating Palace does not fall out of the sky, let alone one fat man who presses his anti-grav supports beyond their design limits. For a random equipment failure to kill a key character… well, it is a very *Traveller* result.
- **Suicide:** King Oleb is a man of great passions – and great sorrows, when a black mood takes him. He clearly has a death wish, between his chosen sport and his decision to gamble his entire kingdom on a bunch of pirates. Maybe he switched off his grav belt in a moment of despair.
- **The Vespexers:** The tribes that dwell on the surface of Drinax are technically subjects of the king, but there is a bigger gulf between their miserable existences and life in the Floating Palace than there is between galaxies. One of them might have taken a snap shot at one of the despised Hawk Warriors, and hit the king.

- **Prince Harrick:** The resurrected prince wants to claim the throne before his sister's plans to revive Drinax come to fruition. He has allies in the Scholar's Tower who could have sabotaged the king's belt.
- **Princess Rao:** The secretive, scheming Princess intends to use Zhodani agents to secure her plans for Drinax. Maybe she feared her father would object, and so eliminated him before he could stop her.
- **A Rival in Court:** Any of the schemers in the Floating Palace might object to the king's crazy schemes to restore Drinax. For want of a grav-belt, the king fell; for want of a king, the renewed Kingdom of Drinax never happened.
- **The Imperium:** If the Travellers have an especially low Standing (-40 or worse) with the Imperium, then perhaps an assassin was sent from Tobia to kill the king. The assassin might have sabotaged Oleb's grav-belts, then traced the king down to finish the job.
- **The Aslan:** Similarly, if the Travellers are enemies of the Aslan, then a *Syoisuis* assassin was responsible.
- **The General Development Corporation:** GDC's psychohistorical projections call for Drinax to *almost* succeed, but fail at the last moment (see *The Vorito Gambit*), so the dream of a kingdom inspires the rest of the Trojan Reach to unite against the Aslan. They might have dispatched an assassin to kill the king and set that disaster in motion.
- **An Enemy of the Pirates:** If the Travellers have made any special enemies over the course of the campaign, one of them might be responsible.

The referee's choice will not materially affect the rest of the scenario.

LOCATING OLEB

If the Travellers are of suitable standing in Drinax, then command of the search party may be turned over to them. Otherwise, they merely participate, and Brie Tollar takes overall command of the search.

Ask the Travellers how they intend to find Oleb. The likeliest approaches are:

- **Scanning:** It requires a Formidable (14+) Electronics (sensors) check (EDU) to locate the king's lifesigns. The Travellers could possibly set up task chains to get a DM – using Flyer or Pilot to weave through the Pillars, or Science to calibrate the sensors.
- **Tracing the King's Trajectory:** Returning to the point at which the Hawk Warriors lost sight of the king and making a Very Difficult (12+) Pilot check (INT) lets the Travellers follow the king's course. Then they need to make a Difficult (10+) Recon or Electronics (sensors) check (INT) to spot Oleb.
- **Ground Search:** If the Travellers have contacts with the Vespexer tribes, they can ask them for local guides and assistance. Then it is just a Difficult (10+) Recon check (INT) to scout the Pillars and find where the King landed.

If the Travellers fail a check, then either hit them with one of the dangers, or increase the difficulty of healing the king when they find him.

DANGERS

Threats the Travellers might encounter while searching for the king include:

- **Hostile Conditions:** Another flash storm could hit at any moment. Travellers in flying vehicles must make Pilot or Flyer checks to stay in control; those on the ground had better take shelter with Survival checks.
- **Dangerous Airspace:** Huge jagged spikes of superdense metal, with bolts of lightning arcing between them – only a madman would fly around here.
- **Vespexers:** Even if the Vespexers did not shoot the king, some of the tribes in this region do not welcome flyers of any kind, and take pot-shots at passing ships with surface-to-air missiles or laser rifles. In contrast, they welcome visitors on the ground – fresh meat is so hard to find in this post-apocalyptic wasteland. Assume there are 1D Vespexers for every two Travellers, rounding up.
- **Assassins:** If an assassin attacked the king, he or she might still be lurking in the area, trying to find the king to confirm the kill. Two assassins are presented below – human and Aslan. Either way, the assassin has a suicide charge implanted that detonates when they are killed or knocked unconscious. If you have more than three Travellers, then it is a two-assassin team. Optionally, the missing Hawk Warrior Horgan might be an assassin.
- **The Fungal Vole:** A Fungal Vole resembles a cockroach, only it is the size of a small elephant and its shell is full of lethal fungal spores that puff out when it is injured. Oh, and it likes hiding underground amidst debris before bursting out to gobble a victim, and it can jump high enough to snap at an aircraft flying overhead.

Finding the King

The last refuge of Oleb, Monarch of the Floating Palace, King of Drinax, Lord of the Star Dragon Throne of Sindal, is a blasted cave at the base of one of the Pillars. Despite falling from the sky and landing on a pile of spiky scrap metal, the king still lives. Cue the Travellers exclaiming...

VESPEXERS

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human			-	-
STR	8	INT	6	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	4	Gun Combat (slug) 2, Recon 1, Stealth 1 Survival 3
END	9	SOC	3	
EQUIPMENT			Vespexer Hazard Suit (+4), Rifle (3D)	

ASLAN ASSASSIN

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Aslan			Male	-
STR	13	INT	6	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	6	Gun Combat (slug) 2, Leadership 2, Melee (blade) 2, Stealth 1, Tolerance 1
END	10	SOC	5	
EQUIPMENT			Hostile Environment Vacc Suit (+12, IR chameleon), Autorifle (3D, Auto 2), Reaver's Axe (4D), Neural Comm, Combat Drugs	

HUMAN ASSASSIN

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human			-	-
STR	7	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	10	EDU	7	Gun Combat (slug) 2, Melee (blade) 2, Recon 2, Stealth 2
END	8	SOC	7	
EQUIPMENT			Hostile Environment Vacc Suit (+12, IR chameleon), Gauss Pistol (3D, AP3, Auto 2), Blade (2D), Neural Comm, Combat Drugs	

FUNGAL VOLE

ANIMAL	HITS	SPEED
Fungal Vole	66	12 m
SKILLS	Athletics (strength) 4, Melee (natural) 3, Recon 1, Stealth 2	
ATTACKS	Claws (4D, AP 5)	
TRAITS	Armour (+8), Camouflaged, Large (+4), Spores	
BEHAVIOUR	Carnivore, Pouncer	

Spores: If the Vole takes 10 or more damage in a single attack, it releases a cloud of spores. Anyone near the Vole who is not wearing protective gear (filter mask or better) must make an END check or suffer another 2D damage.

2. OLEB'S ALIVE!?!

The king stirs as the Travellers enter. He is battered and broken, with jagged spikes of superdense metal protruding from his abdomen.

'Starcursed grav belt gave up on me,' he mutters, 'and I fell. I dropped my emergency medical supplies out there somewhere. Go fetch them, and I'll make you a bloody Archduke of somewhere.'

The emergency medical pack turns out to contain a bottle of red wine. The Travellers may pick any world within the old Empire of Sindal as their dukedom, although the current inhabitants may not necessarily recognise their new ruler's authority.

'Gah. I'm dying. That's boring,' mutters the king. 'Listen, don't let those vampires from the Scholar's Tower get their claws into my carcass. I saw what they did to my boy Harrick. I don't want to end up like the Duke of Albe, pulled out of stasis once a century to sign a form and take a dump. No, let me die. You, come up with some really good last worlds. I appoint thee Court Poet Extraordinary of Drinax, Bard of Sindal, and Grand High Tum-ti-tump of the Outrim Void.' Oleb coughs up what appears to be most of a lung. 'Want to be Space Pope too, and absolve me of all my sins?'

As the wine – and the painkillers – take hold, he becomes less lucid, although it may be hard to tell given Oleb's usual sense of reality.

'We can't stay here. The Floating Palace... it's a joke. A cage. A... stupid thing. We were dragons once. We will rule the stars again. I gave you a Letter of Marque when we started this campaign... of piracy. It's still good. Bring back the Kingdom, and all will be forgiven.

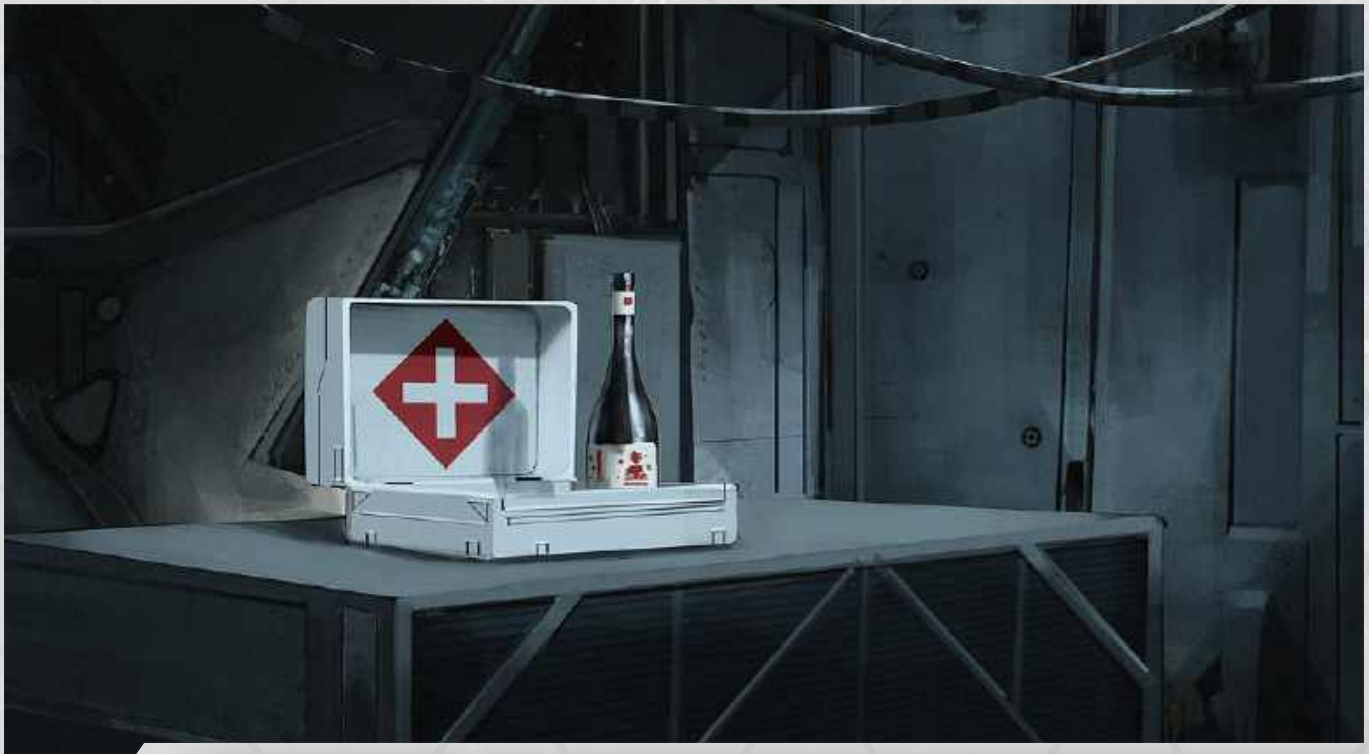
'Listen, listen lads, listen. Tell. Prince Harrick...no... he's not right for it. Rao... she'll be Queen, but she needs someone to... warn her... there's too much of the Sindalian in her... warn her... no more...'

With that, Oleb lapses into unconsciousness, and starts to snore.

Treating Oleb

Oleb is severely wounded. To keep him alive for the rest of this adventure, the Travellers need to make a Difficult (10+) Medic check (EDU). That does not cure his injuries, but ensures he does not die immediately. Increase the difficulty of the check if the Travellers were slow to locate Oleb.

Theoretically, the TL15 medical facilities of the Floating Palace should be able to cure Oleb's wounds, but the king just gave the equivalent of a royal do-not-resuscitate order. It is up to the resuccistate if they wish to keep him alive against his will or honour his wishes. Either way, he is mostly dead for the rest of this adventure.



Returning to the Palace

If the Travellers have not dealt with any lurking assassins, vengeful Vespexers and/or Fungal Vores, then they need to fight their way clear of the Pillars of Night while carrying Oleb's not inconsiderable weight.

If the Travellers are not in command of the search effort, then Brie Tollar commands them to bring the king back to the palace as quickly as possible. They are to land at the Royal Dock, a private pad reserved for the king and his immediate staff only.

As the Travellers approach the palace, however, they see a trio of atmospheric flyers coming in on an intercept trajectory. The lead fighter hails the Travellers, ordering them to divert course to the main starport dock instead. This command comes straight, the fighter pilot says, from Lord Wrax himself.

A Routine (6+) Electronics (comms) check (EDU) picks up lots of traffic from within the Floating Palace; am Electronics (sensors) check even detects weapons fire on board. From the sounds of the comms traffic, it appears that partisans supporting Prince Harrick have prematurely declared the king dead and are trying to secure the Floating Palace before Rao can muster allies. There is confusion over who is in charge, as Prince Harrick jumped for Asim that morning and no-one can find Princess Rao.

The fighter repeats its order to head to the starport dock. If the Travellers refuse, the fighter locks weapons and tries to intimidate them into changing course. It will not fire unless it believes the king (or the king's corpse, if the Travellers do not confirm Oleb is alive) will not be harmed, but if the Travellers continue to the Royal Dock instead of the Starport Dock, they are implicitly declaring against Prince Harrick…

Travellers & Factions

The likeliest scenario is that the Travellers are supporters of Rao, in which case they have a fight on their hands. The same is true if the Travellers decide to make their own bid for power. If they choose to support Prince Harrick, then they can secure the palace easily enough *and* skip the hunt sequence on page 234 – but their decision may come back to haunt them in *Finale*.

The Factions

Why does the Floating Palace descend into civil war so quickly? The roots of the conflict go back to the disastrous invasion of Asim and Prince Harrick's ghastly injuries. Drinax conquered the nearby planet of Asim despite not having any fighting ships, and despite odds of nearly 100 to 1, because the Star Guard invaders were using TL15 gear and the Asimi could muster a few imported TL10 weapons at best, and most their forces carried TL6 slug throwers. Friendly fire and equipment failure did far more damage to the Drinaxian forces than the enemy ever could. Because of a shuttle crash, Prince Harrick spent decades in the care of the Scholar's Tower.

Prince Harrick and Princess Rao, therefore, learned very different lessons from Asim.

Prince Harrick grew to appreciate the quiet contemplation of the Scholar's Tower, and the virtues of peace and tranquility and simply *living*. He lost his ambition to be a great conqueror and hero, and decided to become a good king – a gardener of worlds, as he put it. Without meaning to, he became a rallying point for those who opposed King Oleb's plans for Drinax – a coalition of peacemongers, those who objected to the use of piracy and terror as a tool of statecraft, and those loyal to the Scholar's Tower.

Princess Rao saw the glories and prestige of Drinax could be restored by a small number of skilled warriors, if they were equipped with high-tech equipment and picked their battles carefully. Her plan to use piracy to unite the former worlds of the Kingdom was born from the war for Asim.

King Oleb always favoured his younger daughter. Now, with the king gone and both heirs absent, Prince Harrick's followers believe this is their only chance to seize power and put Drinax back on the right course. They do not intend for this to be a violent coup; their plan is to take control of the key sections of the Floating Palace, so that when Harrick returns he can take his father's place and become the de facto, and then de jure, King of Drinax. They do not want to hurt anyone if it can be avoided, though once guns enter the equation that is never guaranteed. Their plan is premature and misguided, and was launched without Harrick's approval, but the deed is done. Now all that remains is to play out the coup.

Harrick's forces are opposed by Princess Rao's own supporters, who were caught off guard, and by those who do not support either of the prospective heirs.

3. THE PREMATURE COUP

Place the map of the Floating Palace in front of the Travellers. Then, place dice to indicate the presence of forces loyal to one side or another on the various regions. Ideally, have several sets of different coloured dice, and use one colour for each faction so, for example, all of Harrick's dice are blue, Rao's are red, Neutral players white and the Travellers are black. If you do not have suitable sets of dice to hand, then you can either use counters, or just note on the map which side controls which region.

Each dice is an abstract representation of that faction's ability to project power in a region. A dice might represent a single charismatic or highly skilled individual, a squad of soldiers, a mob of blood-thirsty but untrained inbred aristocrats, or something even more abstract like the support of the population in a particular section of the palace.

Initial Disposition

Royal Dock: 2 Rao Dice
Great Hall: 2 Neutral Dice
Ambassador's Wing: 4 Neutral Dice
Palace: 2 Rao Dice, 4 Neutral Dice
Starport Docks: 2 Harrick Dice
Starport Control: 2 Rao Dice
Bazaar: 1 Rao Dice, 3 Neutral Dice
Life Support: 1 Harrick Dice, 1 Neutral Dice
Star Guard Barracks: 2 Harrick Dice, 2 Neutral Dice
Scholar's Tower: 4 Harrick Dice
Gallery: 1 Harrick Dice, 1 Neutral Dice
Royal Apartments: 1 Rao Dice, 2 Neutral Dice
Court Chambers: 2 Harrick Dice, 2 Neutral Dice
Gardens: 1 Rao Dice, 1 Neutral Dice
Throne Room: 2 Rao Dice

Next, add dice based on the major characters and how their stories have unfolded over the campaign.

Lord Wrax: By default, he is a supporter of Prince Harrick. If the Travellers have won Wrax's respect or friendship, then turn the Neutral dice in the Star Guard Barracks to whichever faction the Travellers support (if the Travellers support Rao, then make all the dice in the Barracks Neutral).

Scholar Voha: By default, he is a supporter of Prince Harrick – and that is not going to change. However, if the Travellers have weakened Voha's position, then reduce the number of Harrick Dice in the Scholar's Tower to 3.

Lady Hil: By default, she is a supporter of Princess Rao. If the Travellers have impressed her or, conversely, if she was killed or discredited, then change the Rao Dice in the Palace to Neutral Dice.

Kasiyl of the *Ahroay'if*: If Kasiyl is an ally of the Travellers, add one die of whatever faction the Travellers support to the docks.

Rachando the Merchant: Rachando was likely discredited and arrested after the events of *The Vorito Gambit*. If the Travellers kept him alive, then add one die of whatever faction they support to the docks.

Thao Poloc: The Imperial Ambassador is neutral – unless the Travellers have an Imperial Standing of 6+, in which case change one Neutral die in the Ambassador's Wing to whatever faction they support. If their Standing with the Imperium is 20+, then change 3 Neutral Dice there to support the Travellers.

Chieftain Galx: If the Travellers have helped Chieftain Galx in the past, roll two dice. On an 8+, she and her warriors happen to be on the Floating Palace – add two dice supporting the Travellers chosen faction to the Gardens.

In addition to these characters, the Travellers may have other allies or enemies on the Floating Palace. Are there other pirate ships here? Have the Travellers brought other strangers or refugees back to the palace in previous games? Conversely, if the Travellers have made more enemies on the Floating Palace, then those enemies might support a rival faction out of sheer spite. The referee can add 1-4 dice to any faction based on the Travellers past actions.

Finally, add a token to the map showing the location of King Oleb (or his corpse).

PLAYING THE COUP

This section of the adventure incorporates a board game of sorts, but the referee should not neglect roleplaying elements. Describe the action from the viewpoint of the Travellers – those are not counters moving from one part of the board to another, they are Harrick's space marines smashing through bulkheads and storming a corridor, using thousand-year old statues for cover. Describe portraits and tapestries burning as lasers sear the air; describe refugees fleeing the combat; describe the ancient palace shaking as civil war engulfs it.

While the rules below explain how to incorporate certain Traveller actions into the board game, other actions must be adjudicated by the referee. For example, jamming enemy communications with Electronics (comms), or taking a starship outside and using its turret weapons on the Floating Palace are both perfectly valid choices for the Travellers, but outside the scope of the board game.

The Travellers play their chosen faction (or factions, if some Travellers support Rao and some support Harrick, which could get very interesting). The referee controls any other factions.

Winning the Coup

To win the coup, a faction must either seize and hold key locations within the palace, or wipe out all other dice except Neutral Dice.

Holding Locations: Hold any three of the following four locations to win.

- Throne Room
- Palace
- Life Support
- King Oleb

A location is held if the only dice there are dice of your faction (so, if you support Rao, you need to remove both Harrick and Neutral Dice from that location). Check for hold at the start of your turn.

Wiping Out Rivals: A rival faction is eliminated if all its dice are destroyed with Attacks, or Persuaded to surrender.

The referee may choose to end the coup prematurely if it is evident that the Travellers are in a hopeless or unassailable position.

Coup Turn

Play proceeds in turns, starting with the Harrick faction. In each turn:

1. Choose a location on the map where that faction has at least two faction dice.
2. For every two faction dice in that location, take one of the following actions: Attack, Persuade, Secure, or Lockdown.
3. Choose another region where that faction has at least two faction dice and act there. Keep acting until you run out of valid locations.
4. Finally, any faction dice that have not been rolled may Move to an adjacent location.

Actions

If a Traveller is present, then they may aid the faction by adding a relevant skill to their roll. Each Traveller may only support one action per turn.

Attack: You attempt to eliminate enemy forces through superior firepower and/or antique duelling sabres. Roll all your faction dice on that location. On an 8+, remove one enemy faction dice from that region. On a 12+, remove two. On a 4-, remove one of your dice. A Traveller may add their Gun Combat, Heavy Weapons, Leadership, Melee or Tactics (military) skill to the roll.

Persuade: You try to rally support. Roll all your faction dice on that location. On an 8+, turn one Neutral Dice in that location or an adjacent location into a faction dice. On a 12+, recruit two Neutral Dice or one enemy dice in that location or an adjacent one. A Traveller may add his or her Persuade or Leadership skill to the roll. Gain DM+1 to the roll for every adjacent location you hold.

Lockdown: You order non-combatants to clear the halls and take cover. Roll all your faction dice on that location. On a 4+, remove one Neutral Dice from the location. On an 8+, remove two. On a 12+, remove three.

Secure: You dig in. You may only secure regions that you hold. Roll all your faction dice on that location. On an 8+, note that all Attacks against your faction in this location suffer DM-1. On a 12+, it is DM-2. A Traveller may add his or her Tactics (military) or Medic skill to this roll. This advantage is lost if you lose hold of the location.

Move: Move a dice to an adjacent location. As movement comes after acting, the dice cannot be used until your next turn.

Note this means when attacking a location occupied by the enemy, the defenders get to fire before the attackers (the attackers move in at the end of their first turn, the defenders act on their first turn, and then the attackers get to act in their second turn).

Example of Play: *Three Travellers support Princess Rao, but the coup isn't going well for them – they've been pushed back to the area around the Court Chambers. They've got one Rao Dice in the Royal Dock, two in the Great Hall, three in the Gardens and three in the Court. The Gardens are contested by four Harrick Dice who moved in last turn.*
They choose to start with the Great Hall, and pick the Persuade action, targeting the Neutral Dice in the Ambassadorial Wing. One of the Travellers chooses to support this action, adding her Diplomat 3 skill to the roll. The Traveller picks up the two Rao Dice and rolls them, for a total of 11, converting one of the Neutral Dice into a Rao Dice. The referee asks the Traveller to describe what actually happened, and the Traveller says she goes through the corridors of the Ambassadorial Wing, hammering on doors and shouting that the enemy is coming, and that they've got to fight to survive.

Next, the Travellers pick the Court. They have three dice here, but want to take the Throne Room next turn. So, they decide to Secure the Court as a line of retreat. None of the Travellers has a useful skill, so they don't bother aiding the action, but it's still a success with a roll of a 10. So long as Rao's side controls the Court, Harrick's attacks in that region suffer DM-1. There's still one unrolled dice in the Court, but a single dice cannot be rolled – it can only move.

Over in the Gardens, it's three Rao Dice against four Harrick Dice. The Travellers choose to Attack, and one of them leads the assault, adding his Gun Combat 4. He chooses to roll just two Rao Dice, plus his skill, for a total of 12, destroying two Harrick Dice.

Finally, it's time to move. The Travellers abandon the Royal Dock, and pull their unrolled dice from the Royal Dock, the Gardens and the Ambassadorial Wing to the Court Chambers, giving them 6 dice there – next turn, they'll move those dice into the Throne Room. The third Traveller launches the Harrier from the Royal Dock instead of participating in the battle – she plans on using those particle beam turrets to distract the traitors over in the Scholar's Tower…

Optional Complications

Throw in any of these as needed.

- **Return of the Searchers:** The Hawk Warriors who were engaged in the search for the missing King Oleb now return to the Floating Palace. They are worth six dice – but whose side are they on?
- **Fire in the Palace:** A location in the palace catches fire. Any dice that roll a 1 in that location. The fire spreads to a random adjacent location each turn. Securing a location puts out its fire.
- **Through the Underlinth:** One of the Travellers' allies suggest taking the perilous route through the underside of the Floating Palace via the Underlinth. They will need to navigate pockets of intense gravity generated by the palace's anti-grav engines – but if they make it, they can emerge and take the enemy in another part of the palace by surprise.
- **Voha's Weapons:** Scholar Voha believes the Scholar's Tower – and by extension, Drinax – should be a beacon of culture and learning for the Trojan Reach, not a sleazy piratical hive of scum and villainy. He is a scientist and a librarian, not a warmonger, but with TL15 equipment, he can turn his hand to the art of warfare. Voha deploys four dice worth of high-tech combat androids to turn the tide against Rao's followers.
- **Self-Destruct:** If Harrick's side still controls the palace's life support systems as the coup seems certain to fail, then some young and foolish supporters of his threaten to overload the palace's fusion reactors if Princess Rao does not yield the throne to her brother. These idiots must be taken down before they endanger everyone in the palace.

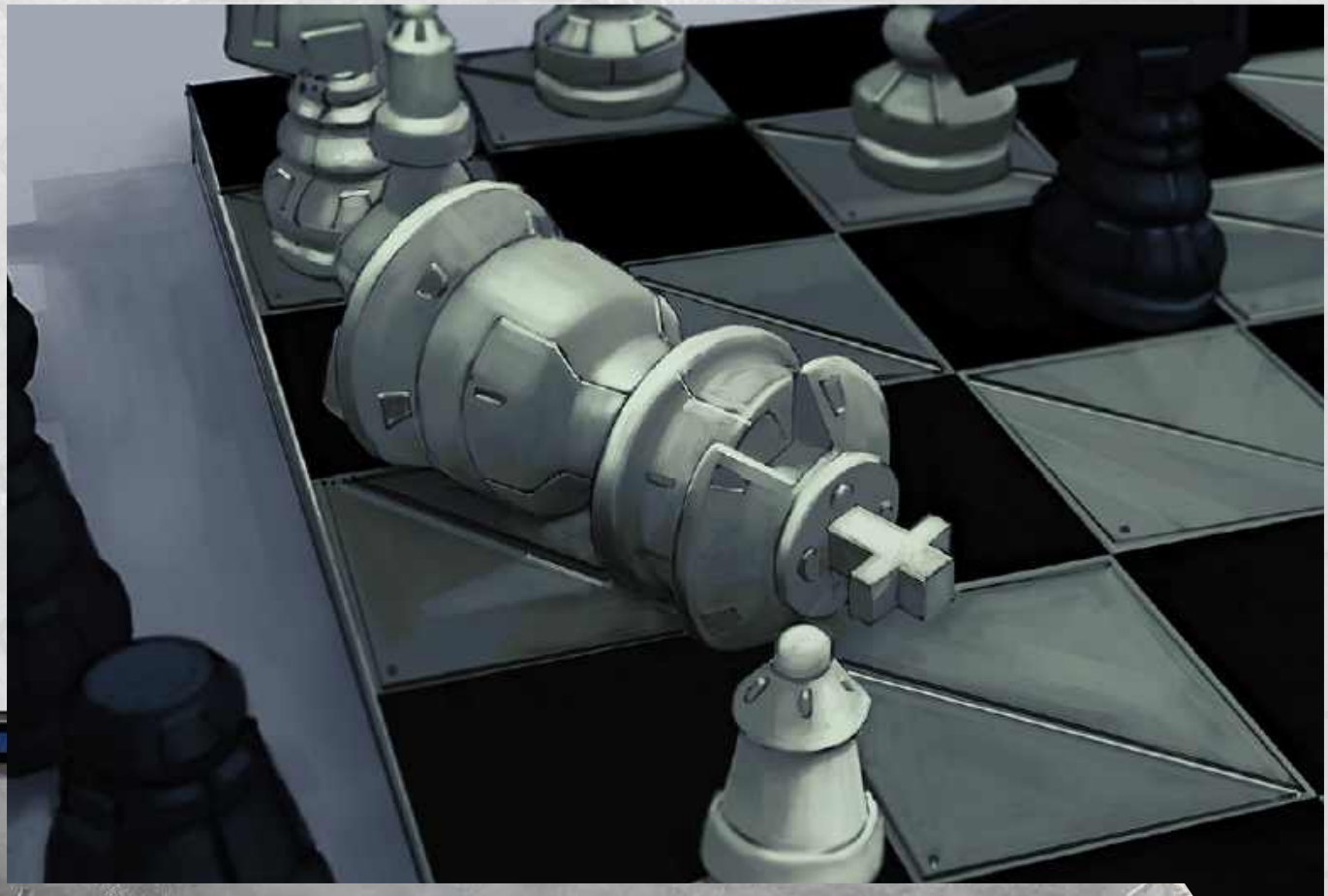
AFTER THE COUP

How did the coup end? Did the Travellers manage to outmanoeuvre Harrick's forces and avoid needless casualties? Did they use deadly force without hesitation or remorse, and flood the Floating Palace with the blood of their enemies? Did Harrick's faction seize the palace and force them to flee?

Analysis of the security systems in Princess Rao's quarters show she was kidnapped by her brother, who then smuggled her onto his private yacht. The kidnappers used stealth suits to remain unseen, and either sabotaged the security monitors or had their own allies manning the relevant monitoring stations, but now the coup is over, there is no need to keep this a secret any longer. Regardless of how the coup was resolved, the Travellers must go to Asim.

- If Rao's faction won, and the Travellers supported Rao, then they are entrusted with the mission of rescuing the princess from her brother's clutches. Harrick must either be convinced to publicly condemn his followers' attempted coup and swear eternal loyalty to his sister's regime, or else eliminated, but finding Rao is much more important.
- If Harrick's faction won and the Travellers supported Harrick, then they are commanded to go to Asim and tell the prince the good news – remember, the coup was started without Harrick's knowledge, so he has no idea his followers have seized the palace. The princess must be convinced to endorse her brother's regime – or else she must meet with a suitable accident.
- If the Travellers supported either faction, and that faction lost, then the palace is in the hands of their enemies and they have got to flee – but they can turn the situation around by capturing Harrick or Rao, then leading their chosen faction in a glorious reconquest of the Dragon Throne.
- If the Travellers tried to seize the palace, and failed, their only chance for legitimacy in Drinax now is to rescue Rao and support her. That assumes, of course, that they do not fly off into wild space and stay renegade pirates forever.
- If the Travellers tried to seize the palace for themselves, and succeeded, then the best way to secure their rule is to marry the princess. Or the prince. Or both. Second-best is to ensure that neither Harrick nor Rao are in a position to challenge them in future, and that means a trip to Asim. Uneasy squirms the arse that sits on the remarkably uncomfortable Dragon Throne.

All astrogations lead to Asim…



4. TO ASIM

Asim is a low-tech agricultural world; from orbit, it is brown and dull. On landing, a Traveller discovers it is equally brown and dull. It is likely that a close analysis of the planet's soil would, under magnification, reveal that to be brown and dull too.

Asim was ruled by the Foundation, a two-hundred-year-old scam perpetrated by a cabal of bureaucrats. The Foundation claimed they had a psychohistorical plan that would take a thousand years to come to fruition, but would eventually lead to Asim becoming the capital of a new Fourth Imperium. The bureaucrats were kicked off easy street when the Kingdom of Drinax invaded; they are still running the show locally, but pay tribute to King Oleb. There is a local governor, Lady Telwax, who was a commander in the Star Guard when they invaded; she is an old friend and army buddy of Prince Harrick. So, do the Travellers land at Asim's paltry excuse for a star port and ask Telwax for aid, or do they land outside the capital city of Capital City (never get a bureaucrat caste to name your cities) and approach more covertly?

Veterans of Drinax

If any of the Travellers come from Drinax and spent at least one term in the Marines, Army or Navy, then they have heard of the secret Dragon Fortress and know its rough location, allowing them to skip the hunt for Harrick and go straight there.

LADY TELWAX

Telwax lives at the Governor's Palace; it is luxuriously appointed and absurdly overstated, just like Drinax. She lives there with her wife, their youngest child, a few servants, and a dozen Hawk Warriors to keep the bureaucrats in line. You do not need many troops when you have grav-assisted TL15 battle dress and plasma rifles, and they carry slug rifles on a good day.

If the Travellers land openly at the star port, then Telwax insists they visit her at her palace. If they ask about Prince Harrick without any preambles, then she lies and tells them he has already departed for Torpol.

Playing Telwax: Telwax is part of Harrick's faction, but her time as governor has taught her how to play politics. If Haricots' coup attempt looks like it is going to fail, then she will side with Rao or the Travellers. If she gets the impression that the Travellers are on the run from Harrick's victorious coup on Drinax, then she will pretend to help them until her Hawk Warriors can arrest them. Telwax therefore interrogates the Travellers as subtly as she can, under the guise of asking for news from Drinax (the Travellers are the first ship to jump in since the coup). A successful Deception check (INT) reveals Telwax is pumping the Travellers for information and that she probably knows where Harrick is. The Travellers can use Deception or Persuade to get Telwax to aid them. Alternatively, monitoring her comms traffic can point the Travellers to Harrick's location – he is in the secret Dragon Fortress north of the city.

STARPORT CONTROL

The Asim's starport monitors all traffic visiting the system - if Harrick jumped in here, then his ship's course must have been logged, and from that the Travellers can determine a rough landing area. Gaining access to the starport logs requires either a Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (computers) check (1D x 10 minutes, INT) to hack them, sneaking in Difficult (10+) Deception check (1D x 10 minutes, SOC) to sneak into the traffic control tower, or taking the tower by force – it is guarded by four Hawk Warriors and two platoons (40 soldiers each) of local infantry. If the Travellers simply request the logs, that is a Very Difficult (12+) Diplomat check (SOC); failure gets an apologetic response that only Governor Telwax can release the logs.

Records show Prince Harrick's ship jumped out soon after jumping in; she arrived, landed in the mountains to the north, then took off again and transmitted a flight plan to the starport before jumping for Torpol. They were still broadcasting the Imperial callsign, implying that Prince Harrick was still on board. However, any Travellers with levels in Deception or Electronics (comms) guesses that might be, literally, a false flag.

If the Travellers gain full access to the logs, they also discover that Princess Rao's private yacht visited the starport here at Asim roughly once every two months, starting two months before the campaign began. In each case, her ship landed, refueled, and took off again. Then, several days later, the starport picked up the telltale flash of a jump, suggesting she visited some other body in the system instead of travelling onwards.

RUMOURS ON THE STREETS

Asking around on the streets using a Carouse or Persuade check (SOC) results in a rumour – roll 1D on the Semi-Accurate Rumours of Asim table and add the Effect (failure get useless, false or wholly irrelevant rumours – roll on the Rumours of the Reach table on page 6 for inspiration, and beware Scurrilous Dave).

Semi-Accurate Rumours of Asim

1D	Rumour
1	The Foundation are plotting to overthrow the Governor! They will strike any day now! (*True, but it's been true ever since Drinax reconquered Asim*).
2	King Oleb is dead and his children are fighting for the throne (*probably true, not hugely useful*).
3	Princess Rao's yacht landed here to refuel several times recently. She has a secret escape route on Asim (*true-ish*).
4	There is a secret psionic institute hidden on Asim, in the mountains north of Capital City (*false, but interesting that they should mention psionics*).
5	The General Development Company are meddling on Asim, and doing experiments on people in the mountains north of the city (*equally false, but getting closer*).
6	A Free Trader coming in from Torpol claims she saw a giant warship in the system when she misjumped into the asteroid belt (*true – not immediately relevant, but true*).
7	There is a secret Drinaxi military base somewhere in the mountains north of the city, established when those space bastards conquered us and destroyed the dream of the Fourth Imperium by overthrowing our beloved Foundation.
8+	There is a secret Drinaxi military base in the mountains north of the city. Here are its co-ordinates. It is called Fort Dragon, and it is there to reconquer Asim if the Foundation ever strikes back. Knowing Drinax, it is also probably sitting on top of some atomic bombs or something to burn the planet. Orbital bombardment is in their blood, you know, and searing us with a self-destruct is the next best thing.

Cleon Hardy

If the Travellers befriended Cleon Hardy, the representative of Asim to the court of King Oleb, and brought him with them, then Hardy can give them the 8+ rumour information – but he may ask for a favour in return. When the time comes and the Travellers hold the balance of power in the resurgent Kingdom, he wants Asim to receive better treatment than it has in the past…

The Prince's Plan

So, why did Prince Harrick kidnap Princess Rao?

The prince believes that his sister is working with enemies of the Kingdom. Blinded by ambition, she has made bargains with foreign powers. His original plan was to kidnap Rao, force her to confess, and return to their father King Oleb with proof of Rao's duplicity. He knows that she has been meeting with her mysterious allies in the Asim system every few months.

He sent his yacht away after landing to throw any pursuit off his trail. It very obviously and blatantly jumped for Torpol – but it is actually doing an in-system jump. It is going to reappear in orbit of Asim in a week's time.

What if the Travellers Take the Bait?

If your Travellers seize on the Torpol lead and never question the evidence (even after you ask a few variations of 'are you sure?' when they declare they are jumping out immediately in pursuit), then here is how things play out.

- Rao tells Harrick where she is meeting her mysterious allies.
- Harrick's yacht returns and picks up Harrick, Rao and a few of Harrick's troops. They head to the rendezvous site.
- Rao's allies turn up. There is a misunderstanding, then a frank exchange of views, which leaves the yacht and the next generation of Drinaxian royalty as a rapidly expanding cloud of debris. Move onto *Finale* with none of the Drinaxian rulers surviving.

5. THE DRAGON FORTRESS

Conquering a planet is easy, especially if you have nine Tech Levels on your opponent.

Holding it is a lot harder.

Hence, the Dragon Fortress. It is Drinax's first and last resort against an Asimen revolt. Prior to the discovery of the *Harrier* and the whole grand plan to rebuild the Kingdom through strategic privateering, Drinax had no jump-capable ships of its own – the Aslan saw to that. They had suits of TL15 battle dress and plenty of firepower, but no way to reach other systems. Their only visitors were the occasional tramp trader, bargain hunter, or Traveller seeking the fabled high-tech sages of the Scholar's Tower.

The 'invasion' of Asim involved hiring a few Free Traders, with the elite Hawk Warriors crammed into the cargo holds like cattle. The Hawk Warriors conquered Asim without significant resistance (Prince Harrick was mortally wounded in an accident, not from enemy fire). However, once they had Asim, there was no reliable way of getting supplies or reinforcements from the Floating Palace if the Asimen fought back. While battle dress and plasma cannons might be capable of fighting for days, the humans wielding them still need to sleep and eat. The biggest threat to Drinax's hold on Asim has always been a prolonged guerrilla war.

The Dragon Fortress is a theoretically impenetrable refuge where the Hawk Warriors can retreat and hold out indefinitely. If the Asimen ever rose up, the Hawk Warriors would pull back to the fortress, then keep flying plasma-spitting sorties against their enemies until Asim was theirs again. To paraphrase Archimedes, give me a place to stand and a secure forward operating base, and I will nuke the world.

The fortress is hidden in the mountains. From the surface, the only sign of the base is an unnaturally flat landing area, big enough for a ship to land, and a number of narrow, perfectly vertical shafts cut into the rock. It turns out you can do really effective mining with a man portable plasma gun, contra-grav technology and a densitometer.

If you can fly or have gravity sleds, then vertical shafts are no obstacle. You just sink down the shaft in perfect safety. They are a big obstacle to TL6infantry. The shafts twist and turn inside the mountain, with plenty of kill zones and strong points where invading forces can be stopped.

Princess Rao is being secretly kept prisoner in the fortress by Prince Harrick. Most of the garrison are unaware of this; only Harrick and the crew of his ship know about his prisoner.

FINDING THE FORTRESS

If the Travellers know roughly where the fortress is, they can find it with an Electronics (sensors) or Recon check (INT). If the check fails, then they do not spot the flying Hawk Warrior patrol stationed above the base. The Hawk Warriors will not engage the Travellers' starship unless they have no other choice – even battle dress and advanced laser rifles do not stand up against starship armour or weapons. Travellers on the ground or outside the ship, though, are fair game.

If the Travellers know precisely where the fortress is, then they gain DM+4 to the check and will likely spot the lurking Hawk Warriors.

THE FORTRESS COMMANDER

The commander of the Dragon Fortress and head of the Drinaxi military forces on Drinax is Colonel Sedelti Wrax, the daughter of Lord Wrax. Like her father, she is a supporter of Prince Harrick by default. She grew up on tales of Sindalian martial glory, and absolutely despises pirates and freebooters. She is unaware that Prince Harrick has kidnapped Princess Rao – the princess was smuggled into the fortress in a cryoberth, and Colonel Sedelti is not about to search the baggage of a member of the royal family. Harrick told Sedelti that he has returned to Asim to revisit the place where he nearly died, and she has accepted this explanation at face value.

ENTERING THE DRAGON FORTRESS

As Allies: If the Travellers are allies or supporters of Prince Harrick, they can just land at the Dragon Fortress and be escorted in by Harrick's retinue. Skip straight onto Splitting Heirs, below.

As Guests: If the Travellers are willing to be disarmed and searched, then Harrick agrees to meet with them to discuss the situation on Drinax. A successful Diplomat check (SOC) allows the Travellers to keep basic equipment with them; succeeding with an Effect of 4+ means Harrick trusts them to behave appropriately and does not ask his troops to disarm them. Harrick claims he has always acted in the best interest of Drinax, and will explain the disappearance of his sister, Princess Rao, once the Travellers are in the Dragon Fortress.

Sneaking In: Entering the fortress covertly is possible, but tricky. The Travellers need to overcome the following obstacles:

- The Hawk Warrior patrol outside. Sneaking past them requires a Very Difficult (12+) Stealth check (DEX); countering their thermal and light intensification sensors will lower the difficulty to Average (8+).
- Climbing down the vertical shaft; it requires Difficult (10+) Athletics (strength) check and climbing tools.
- Avoiding the first set of internal sensors requires an Electronics (sensors) check (INT) to disarm.
- Getting past the kill zone, where there is another pair of soldiers (Harrick's men, not Hawk Warriors) at the top of another vertical shaft, in a pillbox.
- Getting past the second set of internal sensors.

Possible options:

- Capturing some Hawk Warriors and stealing their armour
- Finding some natural caves that connect to the Dragon Fortress shafts and sneaking (Asim's local fauna is mostly harmless, but there are some nasty parasitic cave worms; the real dangers are rockfalls and hidden crevasses).
- Convincing Governor Telwax to smuggle the Travellers in. The Governor outranks Colonel Sedesti, and can request to inspect or take refuge within the fortress.
- Convincing Colonel Sedesti to investigate Prince Harrick's quarters, possibly by providing proof of the coup attempt on Drinax.
- Stage an Asimen rebellion, convince Governor Telwax to call for aid from Harrick, and then sneak into the understaffed fortress.
- Wait for Harrick's ship to return in a week, and intercept it as it leaves (see *The Zhodani Base*, below).

STORMING THE FORTRESS

The fortress is defended by two dozen Hawk Warriors and another fifty lower-quality soldiers (local mercenaries), and they are dug into a position that is explicitly designed to hold out for long periods. Winkling them out of there will not be easy. If the Travellers are determined to go in, guns blazing, then possible options might be:

- Dying horribly in a narrow chokepoint, because you attacked an entrenched position on foot, you dolts. Did you really think 'kick in the door and charge the orcs' works against trained soldiers?
- Telling the Hawk Warriors in the base that Prince Harrick has kidnapped Princess Rao. Convincing them that they are in the middle of a civil war requires a Persuade check (SOC), with a positive DM if the Travellers have the support of authority figures like Governor Telwax or Lord Wrax. If successful, the confusion makes attacking the fortress survivable.
- Organising an actual revolt on Asim. They will need someone like Cleon Hardy or another native of Asim as a rallying figure, but Asimen warriors backed by a few armed starships and elite Travellers might be able to take the Dragon Fortress.

FINDING PRINCE HARRICK

Prince Harrick's apartments are at the very heart of the fortress – right above the vault that would be filled with planet-searing weapons of mass destruction if the Drinaxi had any, because this fortress was built using schematics inherited from the dark old days of the Kingdom, back when Drinax kept its vassal worlds in line with the threat of orbital bombardment (if the Travellers recovered the biological doomday weapons from *The Treasure of Sindal*, and gave the weapons to King Oleb, then one of the bombs has been stashed here).

He stays closeted here with his closest allies (one Hawk Warrior and one average soldier per two Travellers) while he tries to convince his sister to confess and for his yacht to return.

Defenders of the Dragon Fortress

THE HAWK WARRIORS OF DRINAX

The Hawk Warriors were the ceremonial guards of the Dukes of Drinax, back when Drinax was a province of the old Sindalian empire and not a kingdom. 'Ceremonial' translates, in this case, to 'impractical' but back then, style was of the utmost importance, and when a duke has a giant flying palace, his mind inevitably turns to flocks of elite guards soaring through the skies alongside it, their majestic golden wings glittering in the sun.

The Hawk Warriors are not an elite fighting force. While they have become less ornamental and more practical over the centuries, their training regime is still absurdly outdated and hidebound; it is more important for a Hawk Warrior to know the correct protocol to herald the arrival of a ship bearing the second daughter of a Knight of the Order of the Sapphire Dragon than it is to know how to shoot straight, even though the Order of the Sapphire (and presumably, any second daughters of its members) has been extinct for a thousand years. For that matter, few of those recruited into the Hawk Warriors can really be considered exceptional. The marines of the Third Imperium recruit from a pool of ten trillion; the marines of Drinax take the cream of forty thousand souls or so.

HAWK WARRIOR

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human			-	-
STR	7	**INT**	6	**SKILLS**
DEX	7	**EDU**	9	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Gun Combat (energy) 2, Melee (blade) 1, Recon 1, Tactics (military) 1, Vacc Suit 2
END	8	**SOC**	9	
EQUIPMENT			TL15 Combat Armour with integral grav belt (+19, Grav Assist, Magnetic Grapples, Extended Life Support), Stagger Laser Rifle (5D+3, Auto 3, Zero-G), Cutlass (3D)	

*The ceremonial outfit adds an ungainly pair of wings, decorative helmet, and enough medals to strain the grav-belt's carrying capacity.

MERCENARIES

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human			-	-
STR	8	**INT**	5	**SKILLS**
DEX	7	**EDU**	6	Gun Combat (slug) 1, Melee (unarmed) 2, Recon 2, Stealth 1
END	8	**SOC**	4	
EQUIPMENT			Mesh Armour (+2), Autorifle (3D, Auto 2)	

SPLITTING HEIRS

The context of this scene depends largely on the events of the previous section – are the Travellers meeting Harrick as fellow conspirators? Are they here as guests? Have they crept in, and now eavesdropping on Harrick as he interrogates his sister? Have they conquered the base, and now holding Harrick at gunpoint?

In all cases, though, the two royals both petition the Travellers for support. Both Harrick and Rao plead or present their cases; the Travellers must then decide what action to take.

Both are shocked and stunned if the Travellers come bearing word of King Oleb's death.

If Harrick has the upper hand here (the Travellers are his supporters or are here as his guests), then he suggests the Travellers accompany him and Rao to this meeting with the Zhodani, so they can see his sister's perfidy at first hand. He wants the Travellers' support when he returns to the Floating Palace.

If Rao has the advantage, she orders the Travellers to bring Harrick along. She will prove to him that she was justified when she made a secret bargain with the Zhodani.

If the Travellers are in charge, then they get to decide whether anyone goes anywhere.

COREWARD GHOSTS

Princess Rao provides co-ordinates for the rendezvous – it is out near the Asim system's lonely gas giant, Calvin.

As the Travellers approach, call for a Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (sensors) check; if successful, the Travellers detect a stealth-hull ship lurking near the co-ordinates. It is the Zhodani.

THE TOZJABR OPERATION

The Tozjabr are the Consulate's intelligence and special operations arm. Their usual field of operations is closer to home, in the Beyond and Foreven sectors but, to put it mildly, the Zhodani are very good at running long range operations. Sending a few ships on long patrols out as far as Reaver's Deep is not difficult for them. For some years now, they have been scouting out the Trojan Reach. Sometimes, they capture passing vessels and abduct the crews for telepathic interrogation, then wipe their memories. Coupled with their ship's stealth technology, this gave rise to the myth of the Ghost of the Reach (*see Ships of the Reach* page 15).

The Tozjabr support Princess Rao's plan to restore the Kingdom of Drinax. If the plan works, it will interfere with the Imperium-Hierate trade and be a thorn in the side of the Spinward Marches. If the plan fails, it should fail catastrophically enough to still be a distraction. It is win-win, and all it has cost them so far is a little information-sharing, passing on intel about trade routes and the disposition of planets.

HARRICK'S PLAN

Harrick needs proof of his sister's treachery. Her confession might not be enough – she has always been able to persuade King Oleb and the court of anything. So, his original plan was to show up for the rendezvous and send his Hawk Warriors across to the other ship to capture his sister's allies.

- If he knows the Zhodani are involved, then he takes four psionic shield helmets from the Dragon Fortress armoury, to protect himself and the three lead warriors on the boarding detail.
- If the Travellers support Harrick, then he hands the tactical decisions over to them – they have more experience with piracy and capturing ships. All that he asks is that the Travellers keep at least one of the enemy crew alive.

Harrick's Yacht

Prince Harrick's yacht is a refitted standard Type-Y Yacht, dropping cargo space for a bigger jump drive, giving it jump-2 capabilities. It is also packing two pop-up triple turrets with three pulse lasers in each. With sixteen staterooms on board, there is plenty of room for the Travellers and the two nobles. Another four staterooms go to the crew. Fill any remaining staterooms with Hawk Warriors.

Of course, if the Travellers came in the *Harrier* or some other ship, they can make their own arrangements as regards crewing.

PRINCE HARRICK
THE GARDENER OF WORLDS

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	54

STR	5	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	10	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Gun Combat (energy) 1, Leadership 3, Melee (blade) 1, Persuade 1, Vacc Suit 1
END	8	SOC	14	
EQUIPMENT				-

Prince Harrick speaks simply and humbly. When playing him, halt every so often and search for words. Keep a stiff military bearing, but occasionally wince in discomfort as old phantom pains wrack your cloned body.

- The prince was mortally wounded in the first conquest of Asim, and was still in the care of the healers in the Scholar's Tower when his father and young sister came up with the plan of hiring privateers to restore the kingdom of Drinax.
- He supports the restoration effort – the Floating Palace is a government without a nation, a head without a body. Drinax's high technology and culture could help the worlds of the Tlaiowaha subsector. They should go forth as teachers and gardeners, though, not pirates and conquerors, and use force only when it is justified. He would prefer a small kingdom of a few worlds – maybe just Asim, Pourne, Torpol, Clarke, Hilfer, Paal, Blue and Byrni at most.
- He is clearly horrified at the news that his followers launched a pre-emptive coup on the Floating Palace. He never wanted to become king through bloodshed – that is why he acted in secret to thwart Rao's plans. If he had accused her openly in court, he feared it would have led to civil war. Far too many of the Floating Palace's nobles have come to believe in Rao's plans, and greedily dream of having their ancestral territories restored to them.
- Harrick believes his sister has (or had) far too much influence over King Oleb, and that the two were locked in a mutually destructive and unhealthy relationship. The more Rao tried to impress her father by reaching for the stars, the more Oleb retreated into pleasure-seeking, hunting, and drinking, forcing Rao to come up with even more impressive schemes, which meant that Oleb withdrew even further from the 'boring' business of government as he assumed Rao would take care of everything.
- Harrick and Scholar Voha kept a close watch on Princess Rao, and noticed she had several mysterious trips to the Asim system. Harrick believes his sister is secretly meeting with some external power. Depending on how *The Vorito Gambit* turned out, he might suspect GeDeCo, or the Pirates of Theev, or even the Glorious Empire or the Strend cluster – whoever they are, they are such a shameful ally that she will not even admit her treachery to King Oleb!
- The Travellers are the lynchpin of his sister's schemes. If they condemn her and reject her plans, she will have no choice but to abandon her shadowy alliance.

PRINCESS RAO
ARCHITECT OF EMPIRE

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	28

STR	8	INT	11	SKILLS
DEX	6	EDU	12	Carouse 3, Diplomat 4, Persuade 3, Science (philosophy) 2
END	6	SOC	14	

EQUIPMENT	-

When playing Rao, be as charming and persuasive as you can manage. Speak smoothly and eloquently; make gestures to emphasise your words. Never doubt yourself.

- The Sindalian Empire once ruled the Trojan Reach. Drinax is the last surviving outpost of that empire, heir to a legacy three thousand years old. Sindal – and the old Kingdom of Drinax – were flawed and made terrible mistakes, but they brought trade, technology, and the rule of law to dozens of worlds. The Empire can rise again. They can drive back the raiders and slavers, hold firm against the Aslan, offer an alternative to the mercantile dullness of the Third Imperium.
- Drinax has only two possible futures – greatness or obscurity. Her brother's vision of a little kingdom is folly – a little local league does not require the Floating Palace or treaties with the great powers of the Reach. Drinax will fall into dust or rise to the stars once more, with nothing in between.
- In answer to her brother's… accusations, Rao admits she has made overtures to many other powers and potential allies. She will happily introduce the Travellers to these allies. She refers to them as 'distant friends'.
- If pressed, she admits her allies are emissaries from the Zhodani Consultate. The Zhodani claim they would welcome a strong Kingdom of Drinax on the rimward side of the Spinward Marches, to draw the Imperium's attention away from the Consultate border. However, as revealing that her contacts are Zhodani will allow her brother for prepare for a confrontation with telepaths, she keeps this information secret if possible.
- She is due to meet with her Zhodani allies in the next few days. They have a regular arrangement to meet in the Asim system.

RAO'S PLAN

Rao intended to ask the Zhodani for further assistance; the crux of her whole plan is rapidly approaching. Soon, it will be time to draw Drinax's allied worlds together under a single banner and restore the kingdom (in *Finale*). The Zhodani telepaths are capable of subtly adjusting personalities and implanting thoughts and emotions. If they were to telepathically influence key leaders on a few planets whose support for Drinax rests on a knife-edge, they could push those worlds into committing to the reborn Kingdom.

Now, her plans depend on her current situation:

- If she is a prisoner of Harrick and/or the Travellers, she intends to think very, very hard about warning the Zhodani, and hope that this gives them a few moment's warning. She knows, from experience, that the Zhodani routinely run telepathic life scans of ships as they approach, and have learned to recognise the pattern of her thoughts. She hopes they will be able to respond in time to thwart her brother's plan to board the ghost ship.
- If Harrick is her prisoner, she intends to ask the Zhodani to telepathically adjust her brother's mind so he forgets his suspicions and supports her unreservedly. The Kingdom needs a united ruling family, one way or another.

THE ZHODANI

As far as the Zhodani Tozjabr agents are concerned, this is a routine meeting with Princess Rao, where they intend to reaffirm their support for her plans.

The Tozjabr commander is a veteran intendant, Chbradlklodgiepr Dlmshar. He considers the inhabitants of the Trojan Reach to be irredeemably and utterly insane, and so has no compunctions about murdering or manipulating them. The whole sector is tainted in his eyes.

COMBAT WITH THE TOZJABR

The Tozjabr's main priority is secrecy – they do not want knowledge of their covert activities in the Trojan Reach to become public. Therefore, their goals in this encounter might be summarised as follows:

- **Best:** Assisting Rao (or the Travellers) in securing the Kingdom of Drinax. The new kingdom owes the Consultate a favour; no-one else ever knows they were there.
- **Good:** Killing or memory-wiping anyone who attacks their ship
- **Acceptable:** Triggering their self-destruct sequence to avoid exposure

If the Travellers do not intervene, here is how the encounter plays out:

CHBRADLKLODGIEPR DLMSHAR

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human			Male	-
TRAITS			-	
STR	7	INT	10	SKILLS
DEX	9	EDU	11	Deception 3, Gun Combat (slug) 2,
END	7	SOC	10	Persuade 2, Telepathy 3
PSI	10			
EQUIPMENT			Mesh Armour (+6), Snub Pistol (3D-3, Zero-G)	

Playing Chbradlklodgiepr Dlmshar:

- Curl your lip in scorn at the degenerate minds around you.
- Throw people off balance by insinuating they have already been mind-controlled. Play on the myths about the power of Zhodani psions.
- Clench your fists just before blasting someone with your mind beams.

ZHODANI MARINES

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human			-	-
STR	8	INT	8	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	9	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Heavy Weapons (man portable) 1, Leadership 1, Telekinesis 1, Teleport 2
END	7	SOC	9	
PSI	10			
EQUIPMENT			Combat Armour (+18), PGMP-13 (1DD) *or* Gauss Rifle (4D, AP 5, Auto 3)	

TOZJABR CREW

SPECIES			GENDER	AGE
Human			-	-
STR	7	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	8	Electronics 0, Engineer (varies) 2, Gun Combat 0, Gunner (turret) 2, Pilot (spacecraft) 2
END	8	SOC	7	
EQUIPMENT			Mesh Armour (+6), Snub Pistol (3D-3, Zero-G)	

- The yacht approaches the ghost ship and signals intent to dock.
- If Princess Rao is a prisoner, roll 2D; on a 10+, DImshar detects her telepathic distress call and orders his marines to prepare to teleport onto the other ship. Yachts have an easily isolated engineering bay – two jump marines with scuttling charges can take out the power plant easily.
- The ghost ship manoeuvres for docking, aligning itself with the yacht's starboard airlock.
- Roll 2D; on an 8+, the Zhodani do a lifeform scan and detect the large number of life signs on board the yacht. They realise they are in danger and prepare for battle. The Hawk Warriors must board by flying across using thruster packs.
- If the yacht does dock, the Hawk Warriors charge across as soon as the airlocks open.

Quick Boarding Resolution

If using the Boarding Action rules on page 163 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, then the two sides are roughly equal in terms of Armour and Weaponry. The Zhodani have a marginal edge in Skills and Tactics, while the Hawk Guard have Superior Numbers on their side. The deciding factor may be the Zhodanis' lack of Marines on Duty – they will only have troops ready to fight if forewarned of Harrick's forces.

THE HEIR TO DRINAX

With the Zhodani captured and proof obtained of Rao's treachery – or, alternatively, with Zhodani friendship assured and Prince Harrick 'adjusted' to support his sister, or whatever solution the Travellers end up choosing – it may be time to return to the Floating Palace.

Is King Oleb still alive? If not, who is the heir to the Dragon Throne? Who rules the Kingdom of Drinax, the last outpost of the old Empire of Sindal?

How did the coup attempt turn out? Is the Floating Palace still riven by dissent and mistrust, or is it united behind the Travellers? Or do its fabled halls and galleries run red with blood?

For that matter, are the Travellers still committed to Oleb's plan to resurrect the Kingdom, or have they built their own criminal empire?

And as the campaign hurtles towards *Finale*, are they ready to reap the whirlwind?

C H A P T E R - T H I R T E E N

FINALE

Alea iacta est.

- Julius Caesar, on the occasion of crossing the Rubicon

This adventure takes place in the Sindal, Tobia, Tlaiowaha and Borderland subsectors of the Trojan Reach. It begins and ends on Drinax.

Preparation

You will need to print out a copy of Appendix 3 to keep track of which worlds have joined the new Kingdom, and Appendix 4 as a quick reference for the negotiations. You are welcome to photocopy these, or download them straight from the Mongoose Publishing web site. We also strongly recommend you unfold the Trojan Reach sector map and have a very big pile of dice to hand…

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

A major event is about to draw dignitaries and rulers from across the Trojan Reach to the Floating Palace. The ruler of Drinax decides that the time has come, and dispatches messengers to prospective allies across the sector. Depending on the policies of the new kingdom, and the past actions of the Travellers, some, all or none of these worlds may join Oleb's banner.

Once the new Kingdom has gathered its allies, it must force concessions from both the Third Imperium and Aslan Hierate. To do that, it needs to be able to squeeze the vital trade routes across the Trojan Reach, and prove it is less trouble to recognise Drinax as an independent kingdom than to launch a fleet of warships to crush the nascent polity. The Travellers must arrange the fighting forces of their allies and pirate fleets along the trade route in sufficient number to block travel.

With the Hierate and Imperium dragged to the negotiating table, the Travellers must secure the future of their new polity. Who do they ally with? What do they give up?

Finally, the new Kingdom faces its first test – a splinter faction of Aslan decides to crush the insolent humans who have dared claim territory on their borders. Can a motley fleet of ex-pirates and uncertain allies stand firm against the fury of the Aslan?

Before You Begin…

Ensure you have answers for the following questions.

- Are you ready to end the campaign?
- Are the Travellers ready to end the campaign?
- Do you know the rough strength of the Travellers' fleet?
- Do you know the rough attitudes of the various worlds near Drinax?
- Do you recall what happened in the previous adventures?
- Who rules Drinax?

Our Own Empire

If the Travellers have abandoned the cause of Drinax and gone off to make their own pirate empire, you have four options.

1. Ignore this adventure and create your own ending to the campaign. You have jumped off the planned course of events already, so we have the utmost faith in your ability to come up with something wonderful. Run with your Travellers' enthusiasm as far as it can take you.
2. Instead of the ruler of Drinax declaring the formation of a new interstellar polity, encourage the Travellers to make a bid for legitimacy. You will need to alter the Royal Policy (page 247) rules to match what the Travellers can offer, but you can use most of the rest of the adventure as is. The Imperium and Hierate will respond similarly to a wholly new power in the Reach as they do to the resurgence of old Drinax.
3. Run this adventure as is, and then during the Securing the Empire phase, have the ruler of Drinax attempt to re-recruit the Travellers back to the cause.
4. Run this adventure as is, but continue the campaign afterwards as the Travellers pick apart the twitching corpse of the revived Kingdom of Drinax.

RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

Even more than the other parts of the campaign, *Finale* is a framework. There is a lot of dice-rolling and chart-checking, but that is to provide context and weight to the drama of the Travellers' actions. Marry every throw of the dice to a decision, or scene for the Travellers to roleplay, or an opportunity to add detail or colour to the setting. For example, when making a Recruitment roll (page 249), do not just say 'all right, roll 9+ to have Oghma join the Kingdom'; describe instead how a snarling barbarian shouts that this pathetic empire is not fit to be conquered by the Oghman clans, and let the Travellers decide how they counter her insult. Then roll the dice, and narrate the results based on their decisions and the context. Maybe they challenge her to a contest of strength, or buy her off with an impressive-sounding title, or maybe one of them casually remarks that the 'pathetic empire' will put an end to the Oghman raiding one way or another, and she can choose between signing up or blowing up.

Optionally, give a few DMs or rerolls for excellent roleplaying.

In many cases, decisions made in one section of this adventure will have mechanical repercussions later on. Some of these decisions are marked with an alert symbol (!). The referee should alert the Travellers that their decision here will have ramifications that may not be obvious. For example, when it becomes time to blockade the trade routes across the Borderlands subsector, the Travellers have the option of not blockading some worlds. If they do so, however, the Imperium and Aslan will not be as wary of Drinax when they enter negotiations, and it will be harder for the Travellers to strike a deal. The referee is advised to warn the Travellers in general terms of this danger ('*if you do not blockade all the systems, the Imperium may not be as willing to negotiate – you've got to scare them to get them to the table*').

1. THE LONG-AWAITED HOUR

The ruler of Drinax (King Oleb, if he survived *Blood of the Star Dragon*; otherwise, one of his children or whoever took the throne after his death) declares it is time to put the final phase of the great plan into operation. Soon, when all the worlds of the old empire gather together, they will announce the rebirth of the Kingdom of Drinax. The triggering event might be:

- The state funeral of King Oleb
- The coronation of a new King or Queen of Drinax
- The wedding of Princess Rao
- A conference on the future of the Trojan Reach
- A celebration or feast called by the ruler of Drinax
- News of an impending Aslan attack

As dignitaries will attend from all over the Reach, it is the perfect time to strengthen ties between Drinax and her allies, and to prepare them for the declaration. The Travellers may assist by:

- Gathering more allies
- Building relationships with other allies
- Preparing the trigger event
- Shaping Royal Policy

GATHERING MORE ALLIES

If there are any star systems the Travellers have not yet visited, they may wish to travel to those planets and see if they can find Patrons there who might push those governments towards tolerating piracy.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

By visiting allied worlds (worlds that are Suspicious or better towards pirates) and completing missions for Patrons or donating money/facilities, the Travellers can move those worlds further towards Haven.

PREPARING THE EVENT

Drinax's chief advantages – other than the pirate fleet the Travellers are supposed to have built – are the weight of its history and mastery of science. Drinax once ruled much of Tlaiowaha subsector, and is the last outpost of the Empire of Sindal that ruled the whole Trojan Reach. Every system in the region exists in the spiritual gravity well of that vanished Empire, their cultures and politics warped and defined by their relationship with the Dragon Throne. If Drinax can remind them of the grandeur of centuries past, then it will boost the chances of rallying support.

The Floating Palace's other great advantage is the Scholar's Tower, a repository of all the scientific and technical knowledge of the Empire; a shimmering ivory tower, crammed with Tech Level 15 information, the blueprints for wonders that not even the Third Imperium has completely mastered.

If the Travellers shape the event to emphasise Drinax's strengths, they can impress the delegates and improve their chances of recruiting wavering worlds to their cause. Warn the Travellers that even the most staggeringly awe-inspiring event is unlikely to have an impact on this scale – they will need to work wonders for mere spectacle to sway delegates. Once the Travellers have decided on the nature and setting of the event (maybe it is the grandest state funeral in history, or a royal wedding fit for the gods, or maybe they run off and play through *Secrets of the Ancients* just to get Grandfather to do a vaudeville act on Drinax), the referee selects the most apt characteristic and skill and calls for a Formidable (14+) test. If the test succeeds, the vaudeville gain DM+1 to all Recruitment rolls (see page 249).

Optionally, the vaudeville may hire an expert to organise the event for them. Finding the greatest party planner/architect/speechwriter/stand-up comic in the galaxy could be an adventure in itself.

SHAPING ROYAL POLICY

Perhaps the most important thing the vaudeville can do at this stage is help decide on the policies of the reborn Kingdom. There are three aspects to policy – Government, Security, and Technology. For the purposes of recruiting worlds, these policies are each assigned ratings from 0 to 3.

Government

This measures how centralised the kingdom will be – a low value indicates Drinax has no intention of imposing its rule on the other planets, and is merely first among equals. A high value means that the King's word will be law in the new order, and the wishes of planetary governments will be second to his desires.

Government 0 (First Among Equals): Drinax will merely be one voice among many. Each world will have the freedom to go its own way – the 'Kingdom' will be little more than a line on a map, and very little will change in the Reach. This appeals to iconoclastic or isolationist worlds, corporations, religious dictatorships and balkanised planets.

Government 1 (Parliament): Every world will be represented equally in the Kingdom. Every planet will send representatives to a parliament on Drinax. This appeals to lower-population worlds, democracies and bureaucracies.

Government 2 (Feudal): The Kingdom will be divided into feudal estates, as it was in the old days of the Sindalian Empire. The larger, richer planets will be dukedoms in their own right; lesser worlds may be part of a greater dukedom. This appeals to higher-population worlds, especially ones with autocratic or highly centralised governments (feudal technocracies, dictatorships, oligarchies).

Government 3 (Autocracy): Power will be centralised on Drinax. The king will make all important decisions – after consultation with his subjects, of course, should the question merit debate. This appeals only to worlds already strongly aligned to Drinax.

Security

Security determines how tolerant the new regime will be of piracy, and how much it will invest in naval defences. A low Security leaves each planet to fend for itself and still permits piracy, but keeps power out of the hands of the rebuilt Star Guard. A high Security calls for the new Kingdom to have a strong centralised navy under the command of the king – bad for piracy, but good for worlds that fear invasion by the Aslan Hierate.

Security 0 (A Pirate King): The Kingdom of Drinax was founded by pirates – and it will stay a haunt of pirates! Piracy will be tolerated, even encouraged. The whole Kingdom will, effectively, be a big criminal enterprise to shake down traders on the Imperium-Aslan (and, later, Imperium-Floriani) trade routes. Let us be bad guys!

Security 1 (Low Security): No change. Piracy will be outlawed, but some systems will turn a blind eye to it, and others will enforce the laws with bloody enthusiasm. There will be mutual defence pacts and the like to guard against attack by the Aslan but, overall, things will not change very much.

Security 2 (High Security): There will be a crackdown on piracy, investment in ship-building, and stronger alliances against the Aslan. An improvement on the status quo, certainly, and the Star Guard will again become a force to be reckoned with in the Trojan Reach.

Security 3 (A Warrior King): The primary aim of the new Kingdom will be defence against external threats. Every possible resource will be ploughed into ship-building and preparing planetary defences. The king will command a mighty armada, and woe betide anyone who defies him or threatens his worlds. Piracy will be outlawed; current pirates can either swear fealty and join the new navy, or take a long walk out an airlock.

Technology

Drinax preserved the highest technology of the old Empire. For centuries, it has jealously hoarded its secrets. The wizard-scholars of the Tower might occasionally produce some wonder or miracle cure, but never share their knowledge. Is that about to change?

Technology 0: No. Drinax intends to keep its greatest advantage to itself.

Technology 1*:* Drinax will work with nearby worlds to exploit its technological advantage. They have resources and a workforce; Drinax has knowledge. It will not lift their Tech Levels directly, but the Floating Palace will build high-tech factories on other worlds. The Scholar's Tower will be open to deserving students from all member worlds.

Technology 2: There will be some limited technology transfer, especially to worlds on the cusp of advancing to the next Tech Level. Those who need Drinax's knowledge will be able to access it – for a price.

Technology 3: The primary goal of the new Kingdom will be technological uplift. The other great powers like the Imperium or the Hierate are too large and hidebound to take advantage of technology. Smaller polities – like Neumann in Gazulin subsector, or the Darrians in the Spinward Marches – are agile and culturally flexible enough to benefit from intense technological development. Onwards, onwards, to Tech Level 16 and beyond!

Starting Policy Ratings

If the Travellers are in charge of the Kingdom (either because they have taken over, or because the current ruler is incapacitated or completely in their thrall), they can set policy as they wish. Otherwise, initial ratings depend on who rules Drinax. The Travellers can make a single attempt to adjust ratings with a Persuade or Diplomat (or Carouse, in Oleb's case) check; they may apply their Effect to move ratings up or down.

	Government	Security	Technology
King Oleb	3	1	0
Prince Harrick	0	2	2
Princess Rao	2	2	1

The choice of policies will affect how difficult it is to recruit worlds to the new Kingdom (!).

2. THE REBIRTH OF THE KINGDOM

The rulers and dignitaries of the Trojan Reach gather on Drinax. Perhaps they are staggered by the majesty of the event, and one by one they fall to their knees and swear allegiance to the Dragon Throne. Perhaps the foundations are laid in secret, in whispered conversations and clandestine meetings in side rooms. Perhaps the Travellers use the age-old diplomatic technique of bringing a bunch of armed goons to a party, and forcing the delegates to sign up at gunpoint.

INITIAL RECRUITMENT ROLLS

For each prospective planet in the new Kingdom, the Travellers must make a recruitment roll. This is a straight 8+ roll on 2D, with DMs as follows.

Attitude

The planet's attitude towards the Travellers is the key factor in recruitment.

Haven: +6
Friendly: +4
Tolerant: +2
Neutral: +0
Suspicious: -2
Unfriendly: -4
Systems classed as Hostile will not join the Kingdom.

Policy Profile

Each world has a political profile that describes its reaction to the policy of the new Kingdom. A political profile consists of up to three ratings from 0-3, measuring that planet's desired Government, Security and Technology.

It is possible to have a null rating (-) in a profile, suggesting the planet does not care about that particular policy. This is worth DM+0.

It is also possible to have an X rating in a profile, indicating there are no possible grounds for negotiation. In such cases, this is DM-3.

If a Drinaxian policy matches a planet's profile, it is worth DM+1. Otherwise, it is DM-1 per degree of difference.

For example, if Drixian policy is 122 (Government: parliamentary representation; Security: high security; Technology: generous and open), and a planet's profile is 32-, then DMs are calculated as follows:

-2 for Government, as there is a 2-point difference between what the planet wants and what Drinax proposes (this particular planet wants to yield power)
+1 for Security, as the two rating match
+0 for Technology, as the planet's government is uninterested in technological change.

For a final DM-1,

Other DMs

Other circumstances – campaign rewards, existing relationships with characters, bribery, telepathic coercion – may warrant a DM.

Final DMs

As there is a lot of calculation involved, we recommend having the Travellers settle on a policy profile at the end of a game session (or during downtime), allowing the referee time to pre-calculate the final DMs for each system by adding up the results from Attitude, Political Profile and Other DMs. The fun bit of actually rolling can then be done during the next game session.

Telepathic Coercion

Depending on how *Blood of the Star Dragon* unfolded, the Kingdom of Drinax may have the secret support of the Zhodani Consulate, and Tozjabr agents may be available to telepathically influence delegates. If this is so, then have the Travellers throw 1D. They may apply DM+2 to a number of recruitment attempts equal to the result on the dice, representing the Zhodani's psionic tampering.

Lost Worlds

Obviously, any planets destroyed over the course of the campaign (perhaps by weapons of mass destruction found in *The Treasure of Sindal*, or blasted by the punitive fleet in *The Game of Sun and Shadow*, or conquered by the Aslan) should be removed from the list and cannot contribute Fighting Strength to the kingdom.

FIGHTING STRENGTH

The Strength column indicates how many ships a planet can contribute towards the blockade. See page 252 for more details on the use of Fighting Strength.

COMPLICATIONS AT THE EVENT

Old Grudges: Representatives from two worlds are about to come to blows. Unless the Travellers intervene, their gathering will be marred by an unseemly fistfight between dignitaries. Likely participants:

- Any of the Dustbelt Worlds and their ancestral foes, the Oghman Clans
- Star Guard loyalists from Byrni brawl with pirate allies of the Travellers
- Aslan allies, like Kasiyl of the *Ahroay'if*, and worlds threatened with invasion by the Aslan

Unexpected Offers: The Trojan Reach is about to change. The campaign is about to change radically, if not end. Time to start considering what the Travellers will do after the Kingdom is restored. If the Travellers' involvement in the renewed Kingdom is well known, they might be courted by other powers in the Reach, such as:

- A place on the ruling pirate council of Theev.
- Command of a planetary navy by one of the worlds along the Aslan border – if the Travellers have brought Drinax to this position of renewed strength, then maybe they can guard against the impending invasion.
- Command of a derelict starbase just off the Imperium-Aslan route – if the Kingdom interrupts current trade routes, then previously sidelined systems may suddenly see a huge rise in traffic.
- Military advisor to the Floriani League, who are intrigued by the incomprehensible-to-them developments along their trailing border.

Recruiting Aslan Worlds

A few of the worlds on the chart in Appendix 2 are Aslan systems. It is exceedingly unlikely that the Travellers will be able to recruit any of these systems, but it is possible that an Aslan clan might switch sides.

Tailor the offers and opportunities to offer the possibility of a satisfying ending for a Travellers. Focus especially on those Travellers less strongly connected to the Kingdom – if a Traveller is already betrothed to Prince Harrick, there is no need to give him or her a personalised finale, as that Traveller's fate is already strongly bound to Drinax.

Lost Friends: Are there any friends, rivals or enemies from career creation who deserve to come back (or finally make an appearance)? At this stage of the campaign, do not bother starting up whole new plots. Instead, use these ghosts from the past as a way to remind the Travellers how far they have come. For example, if a Traveller rolled up a Rival during their Navy career, you could have that Rival be part of an Imperial delegation. The Rival is now a commander in the Imperium's fleet; the Traveller was a gunner, then a drifter, then a pirate, and then a pirate king who commands a dozen ships, and will be a Duke of the Kingdom of Drinax when all this is over.

Similarly, an old enemy might show up pursuing empty and pointless revenge. Once, the enemy and the Traveller might have fought to the death – now, that fight is meaningless, and the Traveller can just sit down with his old nemesis and have a drink in a quiet corner of the palace.

Skyquake: The gravity drives that support the Floating Palace fail briefly, and the whole palace lurches down for a moment. Perhaps the drives were damaged in the recent coup attempt, or maybe they are just hundreds of years old and poorly maintained. Either way, it causes panic at the event that the Travellers must deal with.

COLLECTING THE STRAGGLERS

The initial Recruitment roll determines which systems are willing to join the new Kingdom, and which are unconvinced. Now, the Travellers have a brief window of 2D weeks to change their minds. The Travellers may voyage (as a group or individually) to any systems within range, but they must be back on Drinax before the window closes.

Visiting a system and meeting with the planetary government in person allows a Traveller to make a second Recruitment roll. The Traveller must either have an existing relationship with a member of the planetary government (completed a Patron mission, existing Contact or Ally, met them in a previous adventure, etc.), or pass whatever challenges or complications the referee decides are suitable for that planet (*'to win the favour of the King of the Southern Continent of Scaladon, you must defeat him in a poetry slam – make an Art check'*). This second Recruitment roll is made in the same way as the first, with two changes:

- The Travellers may attempt to justify the policies of Drinax with a Diplomat or Advocate check. If the Profile is DM-1, this is a Difficult (10+) check. If it is DM-2, it is a Very Difficult (12+) check. If it is DM-3 or worse, it is a Formidable (14+) check.
- If there are *no* other systems loyal to the Kingdom of Drinax within 3 parsecs (hexes) of the planet, the Recruitment roll is DM-1. If *all* other systems within 3 parsecs are loyal to the kingdom, then the Recruitment roll is DM+2.

PROCLAIMING THE KINGDOM

Finally, once all planets willing to join are known, the King of Drinax proclaims the re-establishment of the Kingdom of Drinax. Messages go out on every trader and courier, announcing the joyous news. In a solemn ceremony, the king asks that the Travellers produce the Letter of Marque they were issued at the start of the campaign. The king reads the letter and declares that since the Travellers were acting under the authority of the Kingdom, their crimes (at least, any they committed within the borders of the reborn kingdom) are retroactively forgiven.

He then ennobles all the Travellers, or gives them another suitable reward of their choice. Their titles or rewards are determined by the size of the reborn kingdom.

The Kingdom is...

- A handful of systems in the Tlioawaha subsector (1-5 systems): One Reward roll
- Most of the non-Aslan worlds in Tlioawaha, plus a few worlds along the Borderlands and Sindalian Main (6-15 systems): Two Reward rolls
- A new power in the Reach (16+) systems: Three Reward rolls. At this scale, Oleb can get away with claiming the title Emperor of Sindal.

Choose the type of reward (Title, Gift or Credits) before rolling on the Traveller Rewards table. Travellers may only accept the rewards of a roll of 8+ if the Kingdom is at least 16 worlds in size.

Travellers who started all the way back in *Honour Among Thieves* gain DM+1 to their rolls.

Traveller Rewards

1D	Title	Gift	Credits
1	Knight of Drinax (SOC 10, or +1)	Antique, elegant weapon or armour	MCr0.5
2	Knight of Drinax (SOC 10, or +1)	Valuable art from the museum of Drinax	MCr1
3	Knight of the Order of the Star Dragon (SOC 11, or +1)	TL15 Custom Augment	MCr2
4	Baron of (pick a region on a planet) (SOC 12, or +1)	TL15 Custom Weapon	MCr5
5	Marquis of (planet) (SOC 13, or +1)	TL15 Custom Armour	MCr10
6	Count of (planet) (SOC 14, or +1)	TL15 Custom Project	MCr20
7	Duke of (Subsector) (SOC 15)	Mysterious artefact from the days of Sindal	MCr50
8+	Grand Duke of (Subsector) (SOC 15)	Seriously, what do you want, a planet?	MCr100

Title: DM+1 if Government Policy is 2 or 3
Gift: DM+1 if Technology Policy is 0 or 1
Credits: DM+1 if Security Policy is 2 or 3

3. SHOUTING INTO THE VOID

Declaring the Kingdom reborn is not enough – the Great Powers of the Trojan Reach need to recognise it.
The Imperium pays little attention to the petty politics of the Outrim Void. If two or three worlds want to band together and call themselves the Senlis Foederate or Strend Cluster, let them. The Imperium will give them all due honours, send them a very fancy Christmas card every year, and get rid of some obscure and annoying noble by appointing him ambassador to the Obscure Realms. As long as the new polity does not interfere with Imperial trade or defence, the Imperium is content to let the barbarians wear whatever hats they like.

The Aslan are – usually – even less bothered. Sometimes, one clan or another takes offence for no discernible reason, but usually the Aslan leave everything beyond their borders to the *ihatei*.

The new Kingdom of Drinax is a different matter. King Oleb needs the new Kingdom to be able to claim taxes and passage fees from the Imperium-Aslan trade route. It needs to be treated as a player in the great game, not just a notation on the star charts. It needs treaties that will be respected and upheld, not ones full of empty aspirations and overblown verbiage that can be boiled down to absolutely nothing.

For that to happen, the Kingdom of Drinax needs show its strength. King Oleb's plan is to mount a blockade – to flood the trade route with so many pirates and fighting ships that the Imperium sees it is cheaper to make peace and pay Drinax's wholly reasonable taxes than to make war and crush the new Kingdom. The Travellers may come up with other plans like seizing a key world, conducting war games, or wiping out Theev. Any show of force will do, so long as it is a suitably impressive one.

DETERMINING FIGHTING STRENGTH

Fighting Strength is a semi-abstract depiction of Drinax's ability to project force. It is measured in dice, and the Travellers get Fighting Strength dice from their ships and recruited systems. Fighting Strength dice do not directly correlate to tonnage or number of ships – Fighting Strength is concerned with Drinax's ability to block and harass shipping along the trade routes, and when you are dealing with hit-and-run pirate attacks and nuisance raids on civilian ships, five 400-ton armed corsairs are much more useful than a 2,000-ton cruiser.

Fighting Strength from Fleet

The Travellers gain +1 Fighting Strength from every 500 tons of ships in their fleet, rounding up. However, ships that displace more than 1,000 dtons count as displacing only 1,000 dtons (in other words, it is impossible to get more than +2 Fighting Strength from a

Example Pirate Fleets

Small Pirate Fleet	dTons	Medium Pirate Fleet	dTons	Huge Pirate Fleet	dTons
Harrier	200	Harrier	200	Harrier	200
Scout	100	Scout	100	Scout	100
Scout	100	Corsair	400	Cutlass	600
Salvage Hauler	300	Salvage Hauler	300	Blockade Runner	400
		Tai'ao	400	Cruiser	2000 (1000)
		Interceptor	200	Cruiser	2000 (1000)
		Cutlass	600	Pocket Warship	5000 (1000)
		Blockade Runner	400	Fleet Picket	500
		Treasure Ship	1600 (1000)	Eurisko	100,000 (1000)
		Halaheike	1200 (1000)	Gazelle	400
				Gazelle	400
				Gazelle	400
				Escort	8000 (1000)
				Corsair	400
				Salvage Hauler	300
				Scout	100
				Scout	100
				Far Trader	200
				Far Trader	200
Effective Tonnage	900		4600		9300
Fighting Strength	2		10		19

single ship. Groups who complain about their hard-won capital ships being undervalued may be mollified if the referee informs them that big ships will come into their own later in the adventure...).

Only count armed ships that could reasonably put up a fight. An unarmed freighter, or Scout with a single turret equipped with a lonely beam laser is not much of a pirate.

Fighting Strength from Recruited Systems

Each system recruited to the new Kingdom also contributes Fighting Strength dice, as noted in Appendix 3.

In the case of recruited systems, Fighting Strength is not always a measure of that system's actual naval tonnage. A well-populated, high-tech system like Torpal has many thousands of tons of ships, but is not willing to gamble its entire navy on the success of the Drinaxian experiment. By contrast, a minor world like Exocet might only have two or three starships total, but is ready to commit every one of them to the blockade.

Fighting Strength from Allies

The Travellers may have won allies elsewhere in the Trojan Reach. If they call upon these allies for military support, the referee should give the Travellers extra Fighting Strength dice. Few allies are likely to be willing to go to war with the Imperium outright, but can provide logistical support and assistance.

For example, if the Travellers won the friendship of the *Ahroay'if* clan, that is worth +6 Fighting Strength. Logistical support from the powerful GeDeCo corporation is worth +10 Fighting Strength.

THE BLOCKADE

Appendix 2 lists the worlds along the Imperium-Aslan trade route. There are three sets of planets – the jump-3 route, the jump-2 route, and the Backwaters. To mount a successful blockade, the Travellers must successfully block *either* the jump-3 or jump-2 route. Blocking both or blocking some or all the Backwater systems will increase the chances of a successful negotiation with the Imperium and Hierate, but the Travellers need a successful blockade of one of the main routes first.

Blockading extra systems can be useful later on – the Travellers can agree to drop the blockade of some minor border world as an extra concession to the Imperium when negotiating their treaty.

ASSIGNING FIGHTING STRENGTH

The Travellers must follow these steps to determine the success of the blockade.

1. Assign any number of Fighting Strength dice to systems listed in Appendix 3. Dice not assigned are kept in reserve, and do not contribute towards the blockade.
2. Travellers may take command of individual systems, as may allied captains with a Tactics (naval) skill of 3 or more.
3. Pick a system from the list.
    a. If there is a Traveller or allied captain present, that Traveller may make a Tactics (naval) check (INT) as part of a task chain.
    b. Roll the Fighting Strength dice assigned to that systems.
    c. If the total rolled for a system exceeds the target number for that system, then the system is considered Blockaded.
    d. Remove any dice that rolled an odd number (1, 3 or 5). This represents a combination of battle damage, attrition, and ships returning to their home systems to take up their regular duties again. If there is a Traveller or allied captain in that system with Leadership, that Traveller may make a Leadership check (SOC). If successful, then casualties are reduced by half the Effect, rounded down.
1. Move onto another system and repeat step three until all systems on the table have been resolved.
2. If all the systems in either the jump-3 or jump-2 routes are blockaded, the Travellers may declare the blockade complete. If they do so, remove any remaining Fighting Strength dice, add them to the reserve and move onto the next part of the adventure.
3. Otherwise, remove any remaining Fighting Strength dice, add them to the reserve and return to step one.

ADJUSTING DICE MODIFIERS

There are several ways the Travellers can try to push the odds in their favour.

- **Gaps in the Blockade:** It is permissible to ignore one or two systems – Wildemann is the obvious choice. After all, even if Imperial trade convoys can jump to Wildemann without interference, they are still 10 parsecs coreward of Tyokh. However, leaving any gaps in the blockade weakens the overall impression of Drinax and makes it harder to secure the other systems. Leaving one system off the list gives DM-1 to all other Blockade rolls; leaving two systems off gives DM-3. It also incurs penalties to the negotiation in the next part of the adventure; see page 275.
- **Recruited Planets:** If a system is part of the new Kingdom of Drinax, Fighting Strength rolls in that system gain DM+1.
- **Sabotaging Planetary Defence Forces or Planetary Escorts:** If the Travellers can come up with a reasonable method of sabotaging the enemy ships that might interfere with the blockade (say, by bribing planetary defense forces, feeding them false information, or sneaking saboteurs on board convoy escorts), and make any requisite checks demanded by the referee, it is worth DM+2 for that system.
- **Agents in Starports:** Similarly, Travellers whose skills lie in the social or stealthy line of piracy rather than the tactical might be gainfully employed hanging around starport bars, gathering information or sowing rumours, for DM+2 to rolls in that system.

BLOCKADE COMPLICATIONS

- A civilian freighter tries to run the blockade. Do the Travellers give the order to fire to keep it from jumping to the next system?
- A civilian vessel tries to dodge the blockade by scooping fuel from a gas giant, but they get into trouble. Do the Travellers risk their own ship's safety and mount a rescue attempt?
- A vessel from the Florian League arrives in a blockaded system and asks to be let through. It could be trying to smuggle trade goods through, undermining the blockade. How do the Travellers respond to the request?
- Imperial diplomats threaten the government of one of the blockaded systems, warning them of consequences for supporting the blockade. How do the Travellers reassure their wavering ally?

FAILED BLOCKADE

If the Travellers completely fail to block either the jump-3 or jump-2 route, then the whole Drinaxian plan is in dire jeopardy. Throw all remaining Fighting Strength dice and discard any that roll an odd number, then move onto the next part of the adventure **(!)**.

SCREW YOUR BLOCKADE, WE'RE PIRATES!

The Travellers may, of course, come up with some other tactic instead of trying to harass trade across the Trojan Reach. Whatever plan they decide upon must show that the new Kingdom is a force to be reckoned with. The referee should work out a suitable risk for the fleet, and sap 20-50% of their Fighting Strength if possible. Clever tactics from the Travellers reduce losses.

4. THE KNIFE EDGE

The Travellers have thrown down a gauntlet to the great powers of the Reach. Acknowledge us, they cry! Parley with us and come to an understanding that will endure for a thousand years.

Now is when the Travellers' Standings come into play.

If the Travellers are at a Standing of -40 or worse with *both* the Hierate and the Imperium, then… well, they are in trouble and should probably use the sidebar rules under *Pirates? You Mean The Other Guys* in order to avoid being simultaneously swatted by a rare example of Imperium/Hierate bipartisanship. If both the Great Powers of the Reach want you dead, you are dead.

If they have a Standing of -40 with only one faction, then that faction does not negotiate.

Otherwise, the two negotiations happen in order of highest Standing first.

Pirates? You Mean the Other Guys!

It is possible the Travellers have hidden their association with Drinax, and that there is no acknowledged connection between the fearsome raiders and thieves who caused so much havoc of late, and the resurgent Kingdom with its suspiciously experienced naval commanders. If the Travellers try this, have one of them make a Deception check (INT). On a success, they may *halve* their Standings with both sides. If they fail, decrease both their Standings by 1D.

THE IMPERIAL REPRESENTATIVE

As noted earlier, the Imperium usually sends some obscure and powerless noble to meet with the rulers of meaningless petty domains in the Reach. By establishing a blockade that can interfere with trade across the Reach, the Kingdom has warranted a better grade of diplomat.

If their Imperial Standing is Positive: Viscountess Palaphontane of Gazulin is dispatched to negotiate on behalf of the Imperium. Palaphontane is originally of Darrian stock, and has the golden skin and graceful demeanour common to them. She intends to use the Kingdom of Drinax as a bulwark against the Aslan – she believes that slowing Aslan expansion into the Outrim Void is worth the drop in trade revenue.

If their Imperial Standing is Negative: The diplomat dispatched to negotiate with the Kingdom of Drinax is Vice-Admiral Krond (see *The Game of Sun and Shadow*), under orders to threaten this petty kingdom into lifting its blockade and ending all pretence at extracting taxes from ships flying under the protection of the Imperial sunburst. Krond is vain, cruel and arrogant, but he has also got the political sway to back up his threats – he may be married to the daughter of the Duke of Tobia, after all. If Krond was killed or discredited during *The Game of Sun and Shadow,* then replace him with newly-promoted Vice-Admiral Steyland.

Optional: Split the Party

If you have a large group and/or flexible Travellers, try splitting the group in two. One side plays the pirate negotiators, and the other side are the Imperial representatives. Assign goals to each Imperial representative – the agent of the Tobia Commerce Guild wants an end to the blockade and limited tolls on the trade route, but the military adviser sent by the Navy wants a non-aggression pact and the right to station Imperial warships in the Kingdom.

If you are feeling really ambitious or have a lot of Travellers, you could even run the Aslan and Imperial negotiations simultaneously…

THE IMPERIAL NEGOTIATION

The negotiation with the Imperium has two phases. First, both sides propose their terms for the treaty, which take the form of temporary adjustments to the Travellers' Imperial Standing. Give the Travellers the Imperial Treaty Handout from page 275.

Imperial Negotiations

Standing	Difficulty
20+ (Ally)	Average (8+)
6-20 (Tolerated)	Difficult (10+)
5 to -5 (Ignored)	Very Difficult (12+)
-6 to 20 (Irritant)	Formidable (14+)
-21 to -40 (Hated)	Virtually Impossible (16+)
-41 or more (Enemy of the State)	No deal possible

DEALBREAKERS

The Imperium will not accept any treaty that does not lift the blockade. If the Travellers managed to blockade more than the minimum of the jump-2 or jump-3 route, then they have more leverage in the negotiations.

Drinax cannot accept a treaty that does not include the right to levy some tolls on trade through their space. The Travellers must include such a clause, no matter what.

CONCLUDING NEGOTIATIONS

Once they have agreed on what adjustments are acceptable, the lead negotiator must make a Diplomat check (SOC), with the difficulty determined by the Imperial Negotiations table.

If the check succeeds, then Drinax has successfully negotiated a treaty with the Imperium.

If the check fails, the Travellers may try again, but *only* after making a concession (taking a clause that boosts their Standing).

BROKEN PROMISES

If the treaty breaks a promise made in the Kingdom's Policy (for example, they agree to the 'All Piracy Punished by Death' clause in the Imperial negotiations, but already opted for a Security Policy of 0), then roll all remaining Fighting Strength dice. Discard all that roll a 1 for a minor breach, and all that roll a 1 or 2 for a major breach of faith.

The Travellers cannot break the terms of a treaty once it is signed. For example, if they offer the Imperium favoured trading status, they cannot make the same offer to the Aslan later on.

Example: The Travellers have an Imperial Standing of -10, which equates to a Formidable (14+) Diplomat check. Their best diplomat has total DM+4 (+3 SOC, +1 Diplomat). They need to offer some concessions to have a good chance of coming to an arrangement with the Imperium.

Their initial proposal is:

Average Trade Levy	*-10 Standing*
Non-Aggression Pact	*+5 Standing*
Favoured Trading Status	*+5 Standing*
Arranged Marriage	*+5 Standing*
Naval Base at Drinax	*+10 Standing*
Payment of Reparations	*+5 Standing*

That's a final adjustment of +20, which brings their Standing to +10. A Standing of +10 on the Imperial Negotiations table equates to DM-2.

Unfortunately, the Traveller rolls poorly, and fails the test. The Travellers need to make another concession to get another roll – looking at the list, they decide that promising not to sign a non-aggression pact with the Aslan is the easiest solution. The +5 Standing from that concession isn't enough to get them into the next bracket on the Imperial Negotiations table, but it does allow them to retake the Diplomat check.

It's Your Kingdom

If none of the Travellers have picked up a good Diplomat skill, a kind referee might let the ruler of Drinax help out. Assume the ruler has DM+6 between their SOC and Diplomat scores.

THE ASLAN REPRESENTATIVES

The five Aslan clans with the most interest in Drinax each send a representative. Each of these representatives has a secret agenda or hidden opportunity the Travellers can exploit. These are not listed on page 276 – the Travellers can only discover them through roleplaying or insight into Aslan culture (possibly through experience in the rest of the campaign). Unless the Travellers choose to deal with each clan separately (see page 258), apply these adjustments to their overall standing with the Hierate.

- *Ahroay'if*: If the Travellers managed to reinstate Kasiyl in his clan, then he is sent to negotiate. Obviously, this is a huge boost for the Travellers (assuming, of course, that they parted on good terms), worth a +10 Standing adjustment. In this scenario, the *Ahroay'if* are likely to be at war with the *Tokolfeahr* again and in need of military support, and Kasiyl can offer +2 Standing for every Faction Strength dice the Travellers are willing to hand over to Aslan control.

Play Kasiyl with swagger and newfound energy; if the Travellers are his friends, then he pounces on them with all the enthusiasm of a nine-foot-tall housecat.

If Kasiyl is still a renegade, then his sister Aual is the *Ahroay'if* representative; if the Travellers followed her advice and convinced Kasiyl to remain in exile, then that is worth a +5 Standing adjustment. However, if the Travellers handed Kasiyl over, this adjustment is lost.

Aual wants to avoid rocking the boat – all she wants from this negotiation is to make sure her brother is still safely exiled (or dead), and the *Ahroay'if* trade links with the Imperium continue.

Aual is part of a pro-human faction among the Aslan; she is much more used to human culture and behaviour, so play her as less alien and disturbing than the other representatives.

- **Tlaiowaha:** The great trader clan sends an old Aslan male named Staisarleal to negotiate. He is immensely old, overweight, and prone to nodding off. He is also an inveterate gambler – if the Travellers successfully Carouse with him, they can get him involved in a card game, and add the Effect of a Gambler check (INT) to their Standing.

That assumes, of course, that the *Tlaioawaha* are here only as a formality, to rubber-stamp the deal made by their *Ahroay'if* vassals. If the Travellers changed the relationship by reinstating Kasiyl during *The Prodigal Outcast*, then Staisarleal's goal here is to undermine the rebellious *Ahroay'if* and drag them back in line. If the Travellers can implement a way to undermine the strength of the *Ahroay'if* (perhaps by betraying Kasiyl, or cutting a separate deal with the clans that excludes the *Ahroay'if*), then that is worth +5 Standing.

If the Travellers place harsher levies on Aslan merchants than on Imperial ones, then Staisarleal is furious – it is worth -10 Standing on top of existing modifiers.

- **Yerlyaruiwo:** The Yerlyaruiwo are the guardians of Aslan honour, and their representative is a clan Envoy, a duellist champion named Ehalra. As any student of Aslan culture knows, the Aslan settle some disputes with Wars of Champions, where the battle is decided by single combat. The Travellers can win Standing +10 with the Yerlyaruiwo by defeating Ehalra.

If the Travellers avoided insulting or damaging the *Yerlyaruiwo* clan during their previous adventures, then Ehalra remains aloof from the negotiations. However, if they did cross the keepers of honour, then honour demands revenge! Ehalra will repeatedly and publicly demand an honour duel with one of the Travellers. If none of the Travellers have the courage to meet him in a one-on-one fight to the death, that is a -20 penalty to Standing.

EHALRA

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Aslan	Male	52

STR	10	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	13	EDU	8	Advocate 1, Diplomat 2, Gun Combat (slug) 3, Melee (natural) 4, Melee (blade) 6, Vacc Suit 2
END	12	SOC	10	
EQUIPMENT				Ceremonial Armour (+4), Subdermal Armour (+3), Yeheal Autorifle (3D, Auto 2), Crescent Blade (2D+3)

- *Syiosuis*: The Travellers may recognise the representative from the notorious clan of spies and assassins – it is the mysterious Yekh (see *The Prodigal Outcast*). The *Syiosuis* have little interest in the Trojan Reach, and are here mainly to cause trouble for the other clans. She suggests the Travellers deal with the various clans separately, and offer a +20 bonus to Standing in such a situation so long as the Travellers exclude the *Tokolfeahr* and *Yerlyaruiwo* from any final deal.
- *Tokolfeahr*: The militant *Tokolfeahr* are represented by a male, Hrilya. He brings a detachment of ships with him, and immediately proposes a Limited War for control of the planet of Asim. The *Tokolfeahr* believe the other clans will not tolerate a rival interstellar power on their border, and will no doubt attack and conquer the Kingdom within a few years. The *Tokolfeahr* hope to get an early start on the conquests by attacking as part of the initial negotiations. If the Travellers accept the proposal for a limited war, that is worth a +10 bonus to Standing. If they refuse to fight, it is a -10 penalty to Standing.

Dealbreakers & Broken Promises

The same rules as on page 256 apply to negotiations with the Aslan.

Separate Deals

The Imperium is a single government. Every Imperial citizen – however one defines that term, of course, for the Imperium rules the space between worlds and not the worlds themselves – owes fealty to the individual who sits on the Iridium Throne, far, far, far away across the many parsecs. The Imperium acts with a single will.

The Aslan Hierate, in contrast, is a squabbling bag of cats. The clans may present a common face to the outside galaxy, and are united (or bound) by the rulings of the *Tlaukhu,* but those are customs, nothing more. It is possible for the Travellers to approach the various clans individually instead of dealing with the Hierate as a whole.

Cutting deals with the clans works in the same way as cutting an overall deal. Start with the Travellers' current Standing and apply only the adjustments for that clan's representative, and any special deals Drinax offers that clan. Trade Levies and Imperial Relations must be the same for all clans, but everything else is on the table. Drinax could, for example, offer to repair and refuel the ships of the *Ahroay'if*, but not those of the other clans, to boost their relations with the *Ahroay'if*.

There is also a side benefit – it is easier to get support from the Aslan if you cut *some* of the other clans out, but harder if you cut *most* of them out. The Aslan like it when there are weaker clans for them to prey on, but do not like to be out in front – it makes them a target.

Aslan Negotiations

Clans Cut Out of Negotiation	Standing Adjustment for Remaining Clans
1 (4 remaining)	+5 Standing
2 (3 remaining)	+10 Standing
3 (2 remaining)	+5 Standing
4 (1 remaining)	-5 Standing

The Travellers must decide which clans, if any, they are cutting out of the negotiations before making Diplomat checks for the others. They may choose to go back to a clan they have cut out, but must make a new concession in order to restart negotiations.

5. THE BATTLE OF DRINAX

By this point in the adventure, the Kingdom of Drinax has risen again. The Travellers have concluded negotiations with the Imperium and Aslan, offering to lift the blockade of the Borderlands trade routes in exchange for recognition of the new state and right to levy taxes on ships passing through that space.

Drinax has risen – but can it stand? Now is the time when the new Kingdom's resolve is tested, as an invasion fleet approaches. Whose fleet?

- If the Travellers failed to sign a treaty with either the Imperium or Hierate, then it is an Aslan attack. The Imperium withdraws its ambassadors and declares the Kingdom an enemy state. They will stand by while the Aslan conquer Drinax, gambling that the loss of the buffer state is worth it if it scares the rest of the Reach into line. The Aslan attack has 40 Fighting Strength and 4 Capital Ships.
- If the Travellers concluded negotiations with *one* major power, but not both, then it is whichever one they did not sign a treaty with. If they have a treaty with the Aslan, for example, but not the Imperium, then it will be another Punitive Fleet that is sent to punish the upstart pirate nation. An Imperial Punitive Fleet has 35 Fighting Strength and 6 Capital Ships.
- If the Travellers signed a treaty with the Imperium and *some* of the Aslan clans, then it will be the first clan on the list below that the Travellers do not have a treaty with that attacks them.
  - *Ahroay'if*: 30 Fighting Strength, 3 Capital Ships
  - *Tokofeahr*: 25 Fighting Strength, 2 Capital Ships
  - *Yerlyaruiwo*: 25 Fighting Strength, 2 Capital Ships
  - *Tlaioawaha*: 20 Fighting Strength, 1 Capital Ship
  - *Syoisuis*: 20 Fighting Strength, 1 Capital Ship
- If the Travellers managed to sign treaties with both the Imperium and Aslan, then their attackers are a horde of aggrieved *ihatei* from Kteireo. One of the potential Aslan warlords described in *Ihatei!* leads the attack.

THE BATTLE BEGINS

The advancing invasion force, whoever they are, make no attempt to disguise their approach or intent. They head straight for Drinax by the most expedient route available. The Travellers may choose to have the final battle happen somewhere other than Drinax, by meeting the approaching force in some other system. Drop the Travellers' Fighting Strength by -1 per parsec (hex) of distance from Drinax, representing the logistical complications involved in getting the interception force into place in time.

The invasion force is mostly made up of smaller ships, comparable in tonnage but not necessarily firepower to the Travellers' fleet. However, they also have one or more much larger capital ships – true warships. Even if the Travellers have a greater number of ships (a higher Fighting Strength), then they may still be at a disadvantage, as capital ships are virtually invulnerable to the sort of weapons carried by the average pirate.

The Grave of Empires

If the attackers are an Aslan faction, even *ihatei*, then they have at least one capital ship with them, and it is a ship that has visited Drinax before. It is the *Eikhoifiruah*, an antique Aslan heavy bomber. The Aslan rarely use heavy bombers – no sense in blowing up valuable Territory, after all – so these ships are deployed mainly against foes outside the Imperium.

Like the old Kingdom of Drinax.

Two centuries ago, the *Eikhoifiruah* bombed Drinax from orbit, setting the planet ablaze, leaving nothing standing except the palace floating above it.

If the *Ahroay'if* are involved in the attack, they brought the *Eikhoifiruah* along as a deliberate provocation to the nascent kingdom. If they are not involved, then they sold the *Eikhoifiruah* decades ago and it was purchased by another minor clan. Even if the attackers are just a horde of *ihatei*, there are lords in the Hierate who might arrange for the *Eikhoifiruah* to accompany the invasion force to put the upstart humans in their place.

ENGAGEMENTS

In each round of the battle, both sides (the Invaders and the Pirates) roll all their Fighting Strength dice to determine their Engagement total for that round.

- Dice that roll an odd number (1, 3 or 5) are counted, but destroyed at the end of the round.
- Dice that roll a 2 or 4 are always counted.
- Dice that roll a 6 are counted only for sides that have a Capital Ship remaining.

The side that rolls a higher Engagement total wins the round, and may pick *one* of the following benefits.

- **Tactical Advantage:** In the next round, enemy Fighting Strength dice that roll a 1 are not counted. If they gain double Tactical Advantage through a Travellers; actions (see below), then enemy 3s are not countered either. If they somehow gain triple Tactical Advantage, then enemy 5s are not counted either.
- **Press the Attack:** Remove one dice from the enemy's Fighting Strength total for every five-point difference between the winner's total and the loser, rounding up.
- **Disable Capital Ship:** Remove one of the enemy's capital ships.
- **Force Conclusion:** If one side's Engagement total was more than twice that of their opponent, they may attempt to end the battle next round. If their Engagement total is again more than twice that of their opponent, they succeed. Otherwise, they fail and overextend themselves – the opponent may choose to gain Tactical Advantage, Destroy Capital Ship, or remove 1D worth of Fighting Strength.

The battle ends if one side successfully Forces a Conclusion, or reduces the other side to zero Fighting Strength.

ABSTRACT SHIP DAMAGE

Each round, roll D3 to determine the number of hits taken by the Travellers' own ship (if they are flying multiple ships, roll for each of them). Apply DM+2 if the Travellers' side lost that round of battle. Each hit causes 4D damage.

TRAVELLER ACTIONS

While lasers flare and starships explode around them, the Travellers have the opportunity to act and perhaps turn the tide. Each Traveller may take one of the special actions listed below. Two Travellers can take the same action in a round, but the difficulty increases by +2 for each Traveller after the first.

The Travellers may also use task chains to aid one another. For example, one Travellers with a high Electronics (comms) skill could try decrypting enemy communications, applying their result to a task chain benefiting another Traveller.

- **Seize Tactical Advantage:** Make a Tactics (naval) check (INT or EDU) – it is Difficult (10+) if the enemy has a higher Fighting Strength. Succeed, and they gain one level of Tactical Advantage in the next round. Fail, and they lose one level of Tactical Advantage. It is possibly to blunder and give the invaders Tactical Advantage by failing.
- **Lead the Attack:** Make a (spacecraft) or Gunner check (DEX). If the Effect is 1-5, remove one enemy Fighting Strength. On a 6+, remove three Fighting Strength. On a fail, their ship takes 4D damage.
- **Inspire the Fleet:** Make a Leadership check (INT or SOC). Add the Effect to the Engagement total this round.
- **Defensive Tactics:** Make a Tactics (naval) check (INT or EDU). If they succeed, choose one of the following options.
  - Pick a number of Fighting Strength dice equal to the Effect that rolled a 1, 3, or 5 and save them from being destroyed, but they do not add to the Pirate's Engagement total this round.
  - Pick a number of Fighting Strength dice equal to half the Effect that rolled a 1, 3, or 5 and save them from being destroyed. They *do* add to the Pirate's Engagement total this round.
- **Boarding Action:** Make a Melee check (STR or END); the Traveller may choose to make the check at Average, Difficult (10+), Very Difficult (12+) or Formidable (14+) difficulty. If they succeed, theygain a benefit based on the difficulty. If they fail, they take 4D damage (armour applies as normal).
  - *Average:* Remove one enemy Fighting Strength dice.
  - *Difficult:* Remove one enemy Fighting Strength, gain a Fighting Strength .
  - *Hard:* Remove one enemy Fighting Strength and one enemy Capital Ship.
  - *Formidable:* Remove one enemy Fighting Strength and one enemy Capital Ship, gain a Capital Ship.

- **Heroic Sacrifice:** A Traveller perishes in battle. Choose one of the following heroic ways to go:
  - *Suicide Run:* Destroy an enemy capital ship.
  - *Into the Teeth of the Enemy:* Make a Pilot or Gunner check (DEX); reduce enemy Fighting Strength by the Effect.
  - *Draw Their Fire:* Pick a number (1, 3 or 5). Pirate Fighting Strength dice that roll this number are not destroyed this round.

Obviously, a Traveller needs a ship of their own to carry out a Heroic Sacrifice.

EVENTS IN THE BATTLE

Optional complications or advantages for the Travellers; use any of these as needed.

- **The Challenge:** The enemy commander snarls a threat to the Travellers over an open channel. *'Pirate curs! You think you are anything more than scum? Your fleet is nothing but a flock of vultures. Flee while you can – no pirate has ever won in true battle against a professional navy!'* If the Travellers can come up with some witty or insulting rejoinder, that is worth +2 Engagement in the first round of battle.
- **Head-Hunters:** Enemy ships attempt to locate and board the Travellers' command ship. It requires a task chain of Electronics (sensors), then Pilot to avoid them; otherwise, run a boarding action.
- **Lord Wrax's Assault:** Lord Wrax leads the last remnants of the old Star Guard into battle. They have only a few antiquated System Defence Boats, but it is enough to count as +4 Fighting Strength.
- **Distracted By Loot:** Some of the pirates in the Travellers' fleet get distracted by looting a disabled enemy ship. How do the Travellers get them back in line?
- **Planetary Bombardment:** The *Eikhoifiruah* attempts to line up its weapons for a bombardment of the Floating Palace. How do the Travellers stop it from blasting the surface of Drinax?
- **Flight of the Hawk Warriors:** The Hawk Warriors of Drinax rise from the planetary surface and fly into battle wearing vacc suits. It seems absurd to see winged warriors in grav-belts try to take on enemy ships with hand-held weapons – but some of the Hawk Warriors are carrying nuclear mines, one last buried treasure from the old Sindalian arsenal. They destroy an enemy Capital Ship.
- **The Palace Rises:** The Floating Palace is not a spaceship. It is not even airtight. But if it seems as though the day is lost, then the palace rises from the surface of Drinax, gravity-engines howling as they are pushed far beyond the redline. Atmosphere vents from a hundred unsealed cracks and hatches. Gargoyles and statues crack and float away into the void, forming a short-lived ring of relics around Drinax. The palace will not survive this last gesture – but it brings its massive defence cannons into the battle, which are worth +10 Fighting Strength.
- **Death to Drinax:** The enemy commander refuses to accept defeat at the hands of pirates, and chooses instead to ram his or her flagship into the Floating Palace. How do the Travellers stop this attack – or do they let the ruler of Drinax perish and take over the Kingdom for themselves?

DECISION POINTS

In addition to these events, the Travellers may have some unresolved business to take care of:

- **The GeDeCo Bargain:** If the Travellers cut a deal with GeDeCo during *The Vorito Gambit*, then they know the Corporation will 'take care of them' if they leave Drinax fall at the last hurdle. Do they deliberately jump out of the battle at a key moment, allowing the Aslan to destroy the Floating Palace? According to the psychohistorical predictions of the Jaskarl Plan, the myth of Drinax will inspire the Trojan Reach to defy the Aslan.
- **The Treasure of Sindal:** If the Travellers still have the weapons from the Sindalian weapons cache, they can turn them on the Aslan fleet, reducing enemy Fighting Strength by 2D.
- **Escape!:** If the pirates are losing, it may be time for the Travellers to save their own skins. Inform them that they will be killed if the pirate side loses the battle – there will be no chance to escape or flee after this. They need to bug out *before* the final dice roll. Do they flee?

VICTORY & DEFEAT

No middle ground, no quarter. If the Travellers lose, everyone dies. The Kingdom of Drinax falls; the Floating Palace is destroyed. The Travellers either die in battle, or else are captured, tried and executed as criminals. Their Letter of Marque is worthless – as common pirates, they are *hostis sophonti generis*, the enemies of all sentient beings, and deserve nothing but death. Let them hang!

If the Travellers win, then the Kingdom of Drinax is reborn – and endures! They have helped bring a new empire into being, and their names will be blazoned across the star charts for eternity. Their days as pirates and Travellers are at an end; now they can retire as nobles and admirals. If the hand of Princess Rao (or Prince Harrick) was offered as a reward at the start of the game, then that offer may still stand.

Have each Traveller narrate what happens to him or her in the years after the Battle of Drinax. Do they stay as lords of the new Kingdom, or is the call of piracy and the open stars too strong to resist?

CHAPTER - FOURTEEN

PATRONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following Patrons can be used to enhance the *Pirates of Drinax* campaign, providing the referee and Travellers with many opportunities to explore the Trojan Reach and gain an edge on their enemies. Use of these ideas within and between the main adventures will help make the sector become a living, breathing place in your campaign.

THE BORDERLAND SUBSECTOR

Acrid

Patron: Gera Hollis
Reward: Acrid and Argona become Havens
Mission: Both Acrid and Argona chafe under the PRQ's rule. Conditions on both planets are extremely hazardous and unpleasant, and the company treats the workers as slaves. The revolt of '38 improved conditions for a time, but now PRQ has decided to cut pay and increase the workforce on both planets by 40%, turning already cramped living quarters into hellholes. The miners intend to revolt and declare both planets independent – but they have no ships of their own. They want military support from Drinax to fend off the PRQ's strike breakers. The PRQ has two System Defence Boats at both planets, and will dispatch mercenary cruisers to deal with any resistance. The war for Acrid and Argona may be a brief one, but it will certainly be bloody.

Argona

Mission and Reward: Every MCr1 worth of Luxuries or Illegal Drugs donated to Argona moves it one step towards Haven.

Arunisiir

Patron: Ekaft
Reward: Arunisiir becomes a Haven
Mission: Ekaft is an Aslan landowner who dreams of reclaiming lost glories. He wants the Travellers to carry a message to his distant cousins in the Hierate, telling them to come to Arunisiir and conquer it once again. Upsetting the status quo on Arunisiir will almost certainly lead to civil war, so Ekaft wants the Travellers to fetch an overwhelming Aslan force.

Byrni

Patron: Regent Stoylis of Byrni, Lord Commander of the Antispin Star Guard
Reward: Byrni becomes part of the Kingdom of Drinax
Mission: Stoylis has heard through secret channels of Oleb's scheme to rebuild Sindal, and is willing to support the plan – but only if Oleb proves he is worthy to rule. The Travellers must come up with a way to demonstrate Oleb's wisdom and benevolence – two things the king cannot be said to possess in any large measure.

Cordan

Patron: Baroness Lux of Cordan
Reward: Territory and estates on Cordan
Mission: The Baroness wants to destroy her rivals, Baron Fero and Baron Halley. The Imperium would step in if she hired an army of mercenaries from offworld (destabilising Cordan's government might threaten the security of the shipping lane, but a few highly skilled professionals with high-tech gear could make certain problems… disappear… without alerting the Imperium.

The one complication – Halley is actually a Zhodani puppet. He reports on Imperial shipping to his masters, and has Zhodani-trained guards to protect him and his castle.

Patron: Uht Vamos.
Reward: Cordan drops to TL2 and Low Tech, but becomes a Haven.
Mission: There is a secret civilisation on Cordan, descendants of the original population. They fled into the extensive cave network beneath the surface to hide from raiders, and remained there for centuries. They have become a barbaric, low-tech people, but they want their world back. General Development Corporation troops protect the waystation, and shoot the barbarians on sight. What Uht Vamos needs is weapons. Lots of weapons.

Ergo

Patron: Imperial Scout Ballis of the ***No Stone Unturned***
Reward: A favour from the Imperial Scout Service
Mission: Ballis's co-pilot, a scout named Ferish, was in an air/raft conducting a survey of the planet when an anti-aircraft missile shot him down. Ballis wants the Travellers to help recover Ferish from the warring gangs.

Exe
Mission and Reward: It is remarkably easy to turn Exe into a friendly port – just bribe them. A few thousand Credits each, and the crew can be bought.

Falcon
Patron: John Macule
Reward: MCr0.5, and Falcon moves one step closer to Haven.
Mission: A pirate crew attached to the retinue of Zuekhvi the Corsair claims to have planted a bomb somewhere on Falcon's outer surface, and are demanding a ransom from the asteroid. Macule wants the Travellers to hunt down Zuekhvi's pirates and force them to reveal the location of the bomb.

Inurin
Patron: Free Trader Laro Smith
Reward: A share in profits, if any
Mission: Smith believes that Sarna can be made into a highly profitable recreational pharmaceutical, but his previous attempt at stealing the secret of the fungal caves from the priests resulted in him fleeing the planet, pursued by a torch-wielding mob. The Inurini now consider him to be the Prince of Lies and he cannot return to the planet. He wants the Travellers to sneak into the fungal caves and learn the origin of Sarna.

Pandora
Patron: Administrator Thollett
Reward: Pandora moves two steps closer to Haven
Mission: Rebrand the apocalypse! Everyone believes the old colony on Pandora was wiped out by a solar flare. If new evidence came to light, evidence that blamed, say, the old Empire of Sindal, then many more colonists might be willing to settle here. Thollett has heard rumours the Travellers have connections to Drinax, the last outpost of old Sindal. If they could plant evidence suggesting the Empire of Sindal committed mass genocide here, that would be wonderful.

Sperle
Patron: Free Sperle Society
Reward: Sperle moves three steps towards Haven
Mission: Establish a smuggling route off Sperle so they can bypass the GeDeCo-owned shipping companies.

Tanith
Patron: Councillor Abros
Reward: Cr100000
Mission: Four ships – a scout, two traders, and an Aslan vagabond – recently left Tanith starport. After they departed, it was discovered that all four accidentally picked up stowaways. Specifically, all four ships carried away small primates called volays. The primates like to live in warm, dark caves, and find the air ducts and storage lockers of starships to be ideal.

Researchers have just discovered that volays carry a parasitic mite in their fur. On Tanith, this parasite is harmless as it is kept in check by its own predators, a form of local fly. Offworld, without the flies to eat the mites, the parasites' numbers expand exponentially – and in large concentrations, are deadly poisonous to humans. All four ships could effectively be carrying lethal poisons. Abros wants the Travellers to hunt down all four ships, and eliminate the volays and the parasites. If they fail, Tanith may be declared a Red Zone by the Imperium.

Umemii
Patron: Thona Zorn
Reward: Umemii becomes Friendly
Mission: Disable the starport at Tanith, Acrid or Cordan, thus forcing Imperial trade ships to stop at Umemii and bring prosperity to this barren world.

SINDAL SUBSECTOR

Borite
Patron: BCA Administrator Ura
Reward: Cr5000 and Borite moves one step towards Haven
Mission: One of the atmosphere pumps in the mine has broken down, and none of the planet's surviving engineers has the technical know-how to fix it. The pump can easily be repaired by any competent technician, but is being watched by spies for Oghman slavers. If the Travellers take the mission, their technician will be targeted by the slavers.

Chalchiutlicu
Patron: City Councillor Jilacua
Reward: Chalchuitlicu moves towards Haven
Mission: Jilacua wishes to relieve the population pressure in his city by sending people off into space. For every 1,000 people the Travellers take, his city moves one step towards Haven. However, Jilacua cannot be seen to be defying the other city councillors, so the Travellers must smuggle these passengers offworld to claim their reward.

Number One

Patron: Loank Vetis
Reward: Number One becomes a Haven, plus cut of any profits from the new starport
Mission: Vetis rules an underwater settlement named Felaka, on the far side of the planet from the starport. Felaka sits on a wealth of mineral resources, including significant deposits of lanthanum and radioactives. The other settlements, though, block Felaka's exports and charge such high customs fees that it is hardly worth bringing goods to the starport at all. Vetis wants the Travellers to help build a second starport on - or rather, ***above*** - Number One.

A starport built on an anti-gravity platform, like the Floating Palace of Drinax, could soar above the atmospheric toxins. Vetis is willing to pay most of the costs of the port, but needs an investment of at least MCr100 from the Travellers, as well as technical expertise from Drinax or another TL13+ culture. And, of course, someone will have to protect the new starport from attacks by jealous rivals.

Salif

Patron: Tiznee Zazzle
Reward: Salif becomes a Friendly port
Mission: Zazzle's become immune to her regular anagathics. She needs advanced medical treatment at Albe (Sindal/0601) to tweak her genetic code so she can continue to take the drugs. However, to maintain her mystique, her followers cannot know she is leaving on medical grounds. Therefore, she wants the Travellers to 'kidnap' her, take her to Albe, and then arrange for her to 'heroically escape' after the treatment is complete.

Vume

Patron: Priel Marsden
Reward: Vume becomes a Haven, MCr.05
Mission: Marsden represents an Imperial corporation that prefers to remain nameless (PRQ, perhaps, or GeDeCo). The Vume station is a potentially lucrative source of technology and scrap metal – once the thousands of current residents are removed. How the Travellers accomplish this is up to them, and Marsden has no interest in their methods. All she wants is an empty space station, ripe for development as a luxury waystation on the Floriani tourist route.

TLAIOWAHA SUBSECTOR

Akoaft

Patron: Taofel the Scholarly
Reward: Cr20000
Mission: A scientist from the Hkaairheir clan, Taofel spent the last six years researching a bio-modification that would allow the Aslan liver to process toxins contained in the native slimes of Akoaft. The clan stopped funding his research when the tide of the war changed, but Taofel is determined to solve the problem. He wants the Travellers to locate a patch of rare lichen. The lichen was reported by several warriors to soothe the pain caused by slime exposure, but the territory containing the lichen has since fallen into *Htyowao* hands.

Blue

Patron: Metholde Vong
Reward: Blue moves one step towards Haven, Cr20000
Mission: Vong's daughter Kasah stowed away on board a ship that called at Blue; he wants the Travellers to find her. The ship was a trader, the ***Ginnea***, but the Travellers discover the ship was attacked by pirates somewhere in Sindal subsector; Kasah was discovered and sold into slavery in the Glorious Empire.

Clarke

Patron: High Psychopomp Boone
Reward: Clarke moves two categories towards Haven
Mission: Prince Harrick of Drinax was mortally wounded many years ago, and was preserved using similar technology to that of the Psychopomps until the scientists of the Floating Palace could revive him. Harrick therefore represents the fulfilment of the Psychopomps' promise; he was resurrected from the black slab of death. If Harrick were to publicly join the faith and make it the state religion of a revived Kingdom of Drinax, then Boone would step down and name Harrick his successor as High Psychopomp. Boone knows it will be centuries before Clarke has the technological infrastructure to resurrect the millions of faithful dead (and even then, fulfilling all the promises of the Psychopomps would require anagathics for everyone), but making Harrick the new leader of the faith would cement the church's power for generations to come.

Fantasy
Patron: Tarya
Reward: Fantasy becomes a Haven
Mission: Tarya discovered the wreckage of the Aslan slave ship that brought her ancestors to this world centuries ago. On board, she also found notes on genetic modification that are beyond her capability to understand, but she suspects the limits placed on her peoples' intellect can be reversed. She wants some offworlder to take the genetic information and use it to undo the Aslan modifications, allowing the people of Fantasy to develop their own technology and advanced culture.

Hilfer
Mission and Reward: Allocating a ship to drag water ice asteroids to Hilfer moves the planet one step towards Haven. Every MCr0.5 spent on water reclamation moves it one step towards Haven.

Iroioah
Patron: The Nameless Keeper
Reward: Relief from the psionic dream assault
Mission: The Travellers are telepathically contacted by an ancient defence mechanism – a psionic construct called the Nameless Keeper. It can only contact the minds of those touched by the Ancients, so cannot affect the Aslan. Human or Vargr Travellers, though, are vulnerable to its attacks. The Keeper demands the Travellers re-open a temple buried deep beneath the sands of Iroioah and activate a mysterious device there. It claims that doing so will drive the meddling Aslan away from the tombs of Iroioah. If they refuse to help, it will torment them with dreams until they go mad.

In fact, the device is the generator for the psionic construct. The original inhabitants were wiped out by a plague, but they built a psionic weapon that would copy their minds into the host bodies of other sophonts, resurrecting their empire once Iroioah was found again. They placed this construct in a tomb guarded with elaborate traps and defence systems. Over the millennia, the construct decayed, and now lacks the power to seize control of victims. It can only torment them. If the Travellers follow its instructions and fight their way through the tomb's automated guardians, the construct will then try to trick them into repairing its generator and seize control of their bodies.

Keaih
Patron: Takhweirl of the Company of Profits That Rise Like Mist
Reward: Shipping contract
Mission: Takhweirl is an Aslan female who runs a trading company out of Keiah. While she comes from a relatively modest background, she has impressed the clan leaders with her ambition and talent as a trader, and has access to the court of Hkaairheirko. Her next goal is to bypass the chokehold on trade enforced by the *Tlioawaha* clan. Currently, almost all trade has to go through their port on Tlioawaha.

Takhweirl has a cargo of heavily restricted Aslan biochemicals used in terraforming. She intends to sell them to the government of Albe, an Imperial protectorate in the Sindal subsector. Her buyers wait for her on the backwater world of Homestead, also in Sindal. She wants the Travellers to smuggle her cargo across the border and deliver it to Homestead. To protect her goods, she wants to send a detachment of Aslan warriors with the cargo.

In exchange, she offers a shipping contract with the Company of Profits That Rise Like Mist. This contract involves shipping roughly 1,000 tons of cargo between Keaih and Vorito every month, at a rate of Cr2200 per ton. In addition, the contract comes with documents of passage, letting the Travellers operate openly within the Hierate.

Khusai
Patron: Hunter Syas
Reward: Cr5000 per pirate, Cr50000 per ship
Mission: As Guardian of Trade, Syas' duty is to hunt down and destroy pirates. She pays handsomely for any information that leads directly to the capture and death of enemies of the Hierate. Syas is especially interested in locating the legendary planet Theev – and then blasting it from orbit.

Kteiroa
Patron: Utea (see page 85)
Reward: Kteiroa moves one step towards becoming a Haven
Mission: The *ihatei* need weapons – and Utea knows where to get them. There is an Aslan world called Oiwoiiea, ruled by the *Ahroay'if* trading clan; one of their holdings is a weapons factory, and Utea managed to steal the route of a planned shipment. The weapons

are aboard a 600-ton *Khtukhao*-class clan transport, and are bound for the markets at Tlaiowaha. As the transport is limited to jump-2, this means it will take a circuitous route along the border, and will pass through the Kteiroa system. The transport is part of a convoy guarded by escort ships, but if the Travellers could steal the weapons, then Utea would fence them at a very favourable rate.

However, Utea's information is only partially accurate. The weapons are not bound for Tlaiowaha – the *Ahroay'if* intend to sell weapons to human worlds like Hilfer and Paal along the border. They intend to profit from the threat posed by their Aslan cousins.

Paal

Mission and Reward: Every MCr1 worth of Advanced Electronics, Advanced Manufactured Goods, Advanced Vehicles, Cybernetics, Luxury Consumables, Luxury Goods, Medical Supplies, Polymers, Robots, Pharmaceuticals or Vehicles donated to Paal moves it one step towards Haven.

Pourne

Patron: Nevin Yrral, Bureau of Investigation
Reward: Cr10000, and Pourne moves one step closer to Haven
Mission: A jump-capable scout ship of possibly non-human design arrived in the Pourne system some months ago. The only crew member was dead, and the remains were sufficiently degraded by radiation exposure that it was impossible to determine species. The Pourne bureaucracy fears this was an advance scout for an alien invasion force. The mission is to locate the origin world of the scout ship and determine if it is a threat.

The World

Patron: Governor Olc.
Reward: The World becomes a Haven
Mission: Find a replacement for The World's malfunctioning fusion control module. ***Replacing*** the ancient Second Imperium-era reactor is not an option, as it would expose the population to the truth of The World. He needs the Travellers to find a thousand-year-old reactor part (or a suitable substitute) and bring it to The World before the lights go out.

Torpol

Patron: Provost Shala
Reward: Torpol moves one category towards Haven
Mission: There is another waterworld in the Trojan Reach – Thalassa (0803 Dpres) – where the inhabitants have built huge cities that float on rafts made of woven organic matter. The plants used to build these rafts were genetically engineered from the native flora of Thalassa, and the Thalassans guard their secrets closely. Provost Shala wants the Travellers to travel to Thalassa, break into one of the Thalassan bio-research facilities, and recover samples of the plant seeds along with data on how to cultivate these plants. Ideally, she also wants them to kidnap the famous Thalassan geneticist, Dr. Thorkan.

Tyokh

Patron: The Alley Cat
Reward: Access to the Rea'a Hrillkhir black market
Mission: Capture a dustspice freighter.

The Alley Cat is – or claims to be – the leader of the *Rea'a Hrillkhir*. If the Travellers are to carry out pirate attacks in Aslan space, they will need allies. Investigations using Streetwise checks reveal the Alley Cat wants dustspice, a spice popular in many Aslan cuisines. While synthetic dustspice is widely available, true connoisseurs prefer natural spice imported from the Imperium. The Alley Cat intends to poison a shipment of natural spice with an undetectable slow-acting poison, then blackmail wealthy Aslan who eat it.

If the Travellers can capture a shipment of dustspice, the Alley Cat will give them access to her black markets. Dustspice is imported by an Aslan megacorporation called Tyeyo Fteahrao Yolr. They use fast, well-armed freighters to swiftly cross the Trojan Reach before heading towards the jump-5 route across the Great Rift and the hungry markets of the core Hierate worlds.

Access to the black markets means the Travellers can fence stolen goods at a rate of 20% at any Aslan port.

Vorito

Patron: Lando Nierr
Reward: Become one of the Pirate Lords of Theev, and Vorito becomes a Haven for the purposes of selling cargo and avoiding spies
Mission: This mission is only available if the Travellers take the Jaskarl Hologram's offer (see page 192). Later, Nierr contacts them and offers them the chance to become Pirate Lords. Theev is secretly operated and maintained by GeDeCo, in order to sow fear across the Reach and drive planets under GeDeCo's protection. The planet of Salif in Sindal subsector recently fought off a pirate attack from Theev – if the Travellers make an example of Salif, then Nierr will give them the opportunity to depose the current rulers of Theev with the assistance of the fabled Widows of Blacksand.

TOBIA SUBSECTOR

Boulder

Patron: Jopple Ort, Administrator
Reward: MCr2 or access to the Class B starport on future visits
Mission: Imperial miners in the Wildeman system have developed a new processing technique that could make mining some of the asteroids in the Boulder belt economically viable again. However, this technique is a trade secret of the Wildeman Mining Consortium. He wants the Travellers to capture a Wildeman ore processor and steal the technology.

Exocet

Patron: Terraforming Engineer McGrath
Reward: Exocet moves two steps towards Haven
Mission: McGrath believes it should be possible to 'cap' some of the more active volcanoes, cutting off their sulphurous fumes and making the colonisation project much more valuable. To do so, he needs two things – nuclear weapons, and a pilot crazy enough to fly into an active volcano and drop a nuclear weapon at a precisely calculated location to collapse the mountain on top of the volcano. McGrath needs high-yield atomics of tremendous destructive power (Illegal Weapons on the trade table).

Iilgan

Patron: Lord Selwyn haut-Bizlant
Reward: MCr1, plus the use of haut-Bizlant's land as a hideout
Mission: One of haut-Bizlant's neighbouring landowners, Poetachus, has ordered a new shipment of the artificial bacteria from Tobia. Bizlant wants Poetachus ruined, so the Travellers are to intercept the shipment and secretly replace the bacteria cultures in the cargo hold of the transport with different ones. The bacteria will render Poetachus' estates worthless and barren.

Scaladon

Patron: Themis Bioplastics
Reward: MCr0.5
Mission: The natives of Scaladon believe that only those who dwell on their world will be saved when the apocalypse comes. Their world is almost uninhabitable, as the caustic seas force the population to cling to a small few overcrowded islands. Themis Industries has developed a new bioplastic that could be used to create artificial islands cheaply and effectively, expanding the living space on Scaladon. The problem – the Chosen cult shoot down any ships that enter their airspace, making testing the bioplastic a dangerous business.

Wildeman

Patron: Klim Gobbo
Reward: One empty gin bottle
Mission: A century ago, a notorious pirate named Tamby Dour attacked shipping within four parsecs of Wildemann. The Imperial Navy intercepted and killed Tamby, but were never able to find his hidden base. Klim Gobbo, a belter, found the base by accident – it is hidden inside an asteroid. Klim discovered that the treasure vault in the base has a DNA lock – only Dour or one of his descendants can open the vault. If the Travellers can find a direct descendant of Dour, Klim will show them where the base is, and they can split the treasure 50/50.

Dour's only living relative is Glinnet Dour, a thief who lives on Blacksand. If the Travellers find her and bring her back, they can open the vault and share all that remains of Dour's fabled fortune – two empty gin bottles. Nothing else remains in the vault.

The real treasure, though, is Dour's hidden base – a fully functional, well-equipped and extremely well hidden Class B starport right on the main shipping lane...

APPENDIX 1: ON THE PIRATES OF DRINAX

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

The title of the last adventure is *Finale*, and with good reason – it is designed to bring the campaign to a close, finishing the story of Drinax one way or another. However, if you are having fun with the campaign and wish to continue, feel free!

The core *Traveller* system is not primarily designed to cope with Travellers who rule planets. You might consult the original *Dynasty* supplement for insight, or focus on the Travellers' missions outside the new Kingdom. They might be sent to survey the rest of the Outrim Void for potential allies, or explore the chances of an alliance with the Florian League, to anchor both sides of the sector against the Aslan.

Alternatively, you may wish to advance the timeline a few years, and roll up some new Travellers who use the Kingdom of Drinax as a backdrop. If the Kingdom brings stability to the Reach, then that stability brings trade... and trade attracts more pirates!

DESIGNER'S NOTES

First, I must thank Mike Jackson, the author of the *Third Imperium* fanzine. My work on the Trojan Reach was built on his material written thirty years prior. The weight of history in *Traveller* can be a burden, but it is also a joy and honour to contribute to it.

I would also like to acknowledge my debt to Brian Caball and Tom O'Neill, two stalwart gamers of my acquaintance. While our occasional discussions about *Traveller* certainly influenced this campaign, what really inspired it were the fragments and war stories from their campaigns that I overheard. Drinax, with all its Byzantine lunacy and adventure, aims to inspire similar tales.

Finally, a note of appreciation to Matthew Sprange. His enthusiasm for the concept of a pirate campaign carried it through long periods when the series itself was becalmed or besieged. It has been more than four years since this campaign began, and I have been carrying the seeds of it around for even longer. It is very satisfying to see it finally grown and bearing fruit.

At its heart, *The Pirates of Drinax* is an attempt to find a structure that fits with the *Traveller* ethos, to embrace the idea of jumping in, having an adventure, and travelling on while still having an epic overarching story. It could have been ten or twenty times longer – every world could be an adventure in itself. It could also, of course, have been twenty times shorter. A campaign, no matter how detailed or well designed, often compares poorly with a toolkit, a few rules, and the on-the-spot improvisation that comes with dice hitting the table.

If *The Pirates of Drinax* helps a few more dice hit the table, then it has achieved its goal whether or not Drinax rises or falls.

Gareth Hanrahan

APPENDIX 2: WORLDS OF THE NEW KINGDOM

Sindal

Recruited?	System	Location	Attitude	Policy	Other DMs	Final DM	Profile	Trade	Fighting Strength
	Ace	0109	Suspicious	–11			E7A08B9-5	De Lt	1
	Number One	0208	Suspicious	1–3			C9C6778-7	Fl	2
	Thebus	0309	Tolerant	22–			B534320-6	Po Ni Lo	1
	Noricum	0408	Hostile	211			D8867BB-1	Ag Lt	0
	Oghma	0410	Neutral	001			B214754-9	Ic	2
	Vume	0505	Suspicious	–22			B100477-C	Ni Va An	2
	Theev	0506	Friendly	–00			A434500-F	Na Ni Ht	4
	Marduk	0510	Neutral	——			C377436-3	Ni Lt	1
	Palindrome	0606	Neutral	203			B433334-B	Po Ni Lo	1
	Borite	0609	Suspicious	121			E655796-4	Ag Lt	0
	Chalchiutlicu	0704	Suspicious	0–1			B76A787-7	Ri Wa	2

* On the Imperium/Florian League Trade Route

Tobia

Recruited?	Name	Location	Attitude	Policy	Other DMs	Final DM	Profile	Trade Codes	Fighting Strength
	Boulder	0107	Suspicious	021			D100758-9	Va Na	2
	Exocet	0110	Suspicious	1–2			A574126-8	Ni Lo	1
	Scaladon	0206	Hostile	0–3			AAD98DK-A	Fl	3
	Iilgan	0309	Suspicious	231			C467787-8	Ag Ri	2
	Wildeman	0409	Neutral	231			B201674-C	Ic Na Ni Va	3
	Pandora	0410	Neutral	–2–			B878313-B	Ni Lo	2

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Tliowaha

Recruited?	Name	Location	Attitude	Policy	Other DMs	Final DM	Profile	Trade Codes	Fighting Strength
	Khusai	0403	Unfriendly	X21			A5766M5-C	Ag Ni Ht	4
	Asim	0503	Neutral	222			B867564-6	Ag Ni	1
	Kteiroa	0505	Unfriendly	01–			C4601K4-8	De Lo Ni	3
	Torpol	0601	Unfriendly	121			B55A77A-8	Wa	3
	Drinax	0603	Haven	N/A			A33645C-F	Ni Ht	-
	Tyokh	0606	Suspicious	XXX			B466AH7-E	Hi Ht	5
	Iroioah	0607	Neutral	XXX			B6301G3-E	De Po Ni Lo Ht	2
	Clarke	0702	Neutral	33–			B899753-8		2
	Pourne	0704	Suspicious	133			A9B2887-A	Fl	4
	The World	0707	Tolerant	0–2			E100551-6	In Ni Va	1
	Vorito	0709	Hostile	XXX			E595ABB-A	In Hi	3
	Blue	0801	Suspicious	010			B443487-C	Po Ni Ht	2
	Hilfer	0804	Hostile	221			BA5077A-6	De Po	2
	Paal	0805	Suspicious	222			B564679-6	Ag Ni Ri	2
	Sink	0806	Tolerant	0—			D665220-5	Ni Lo Lt	0
	Fantasy	0808	Tolerant	112			E788400-2	Ni Lt	0

Borderlands

Recruited?	Name	Location	Attitude	Policy	Other DMs	Final DM	Profile	Trade Codes	Fighting Strength
	Byrni	0107	Suspicious	330			B955699-6	Ag Ni	3
	Arunisiir	0201	Tolerant	211			B776530-6	Ag Ni	1
	Tech-World	0204	Neutral	020			A455154-F	Ni Lo Ht	2
	Ergo	0205	Tolerant	2–2			X767500-0	Ag Ni Lt	0
	Tanith	0301	Tolerant	122			A589342-B	Ni Lo	1
	Acrid	0302	Suspicious	111			AAC1388-D	Fl Lo Ni Ht	2
	Inurin	0304	Suspicious	2–0			E668776-5	Ag Ri Lt	2
	Falcon	0305	Suspicious	121			A158448-D	Ni Ht	2
	Cordan	0401	Suspicious	211			A895347-9	Ni Lo	1
	Exe	0403	Tolerant	00–			B300101-A	Ni Va Lo	1
	Sperle	0404	Hostile	12–			BA8A76A-7	Ri Wa	2
	Umemii	0501	Suspicious	112			C521877-6	Na Po	2
	Argona	0503	Suspicious	122			B612586-9	Ic Ni	2

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APPENDIX 3: UNLISTED WORLD PROFILES

The tables in the previous appendix cover all of the likely candidates (as well as some exceedingly unlikely candidates) for membership in the new Kingdom of Drinax. However, it is possible that your Travellers cultivated other worlds in the Reach, and wish to know if those planets might join the Kingdom. Use the guidelines below as a starting point, but the referee should adjust the profile based on the planet's history, culture and current situation.

Government

Apply DM+1 to the Preferred Government if the world was known for its loyalty or long association with the old Kingdom of Drinax.

Code	Type	Preferred Government
0	None	0
1	Company/Corporation	0
2	Participating Democracy	1
3	Self-Perpetuating Oligarchy	2
4	Representative Democracy	1
5	Feudal Technocracy	2
6	Captive Government	As the ruling world, or 2 if Drinax is sponsoring a rebellion
7	Balkanisation	0 or 2, depending on the degree of contact with the wider galaxy
8	Civil Service Bureaucracy	1
9	Imperial Bureaucracy	1
A	Charismatic Dictator	2
B	Non-Charismatic Leader	2
C	Charismatic Oligarchy	2
D	Religious Dictatorship	0 (unless promised the title of state religion of the new Kingdom)

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Security

Start with Law Level. Apply DM+2 if the system is within six parsecs of the Aslan border.

Law Level	Desired Security
0-2	0
3-5	1
6+	2

Technology

- Repressive or superstitious governments want a Technology Policy of 0 or 1.
- Low-tech planets usually want a Technology Policy of 1.
- Average-development planets involved in trade want a Technology Policy of 1 or 2.
- High-tech or weird planets want to go for a Technology Policy of 3, unless their own power base is dependent on having a technological advantage over their neighbours.

Fighting Strength

0: The planet has no ships whatsoever – it is uninhabited, or has slipped into barbarism, or has a cultural taboo against spaceflight.

1: A handful of battered old ships. Low-tech planets unable to build, maintain or regularly buy ships, or really small, low-population outposts.

2: A few armed trade ships, maybe a third-hand Close Escort or a bad tech-shifted knockoff of an old Sindalian cruiser – or a lot of pirates. The average backwater in the Reach.

3: Either a large number of traders and pirates, or a well-organised planetary militia. An above-average world.

4: Either this is a pirate stronghold like Theev, or it is one of the few systems in the Reach that has a navy worth a damn.

5+: Massive military presence.

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APPENDIX 4: TABLES & CHARTS

Trade Route Table

Jump-3 Route	Jump-2 Route	Roll	Other Key Systems	Roll
Wildeman	Wildeman	15+	Pandora	9+
Cordan	Cordan	12+	Arunisiir	8+
Acrid		10+	Blue	8+
	Argona	10+	Clarke	7+
	Sperle	9+	Torpol	7+
Techworld	Techworld	11+	Ergo	8+
Paal	Paal	10+	Byrni	10+

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Imperial Negotiation Adjustments

	Adjustment	Effects
The Blockade		
	Lifting the Blockade	Permits Negotiation
	Also lifting the Jump-2/Jump-3 Blockade	+10
	Lifting the Blockade from other key planets	+1 per planet
Trade Levies		
Minimal Trade Levy	-5	The Kingdom will be impoverished for decades, and risks civil war in the short term and collapse in the medium.
Average Trade Levy	-10	What Princess Rao expected when she planned the rebirth of Drinax – the trade levies will sustain the Kingdom as it grows and matures
Extortionate Trade Levy	-20	It is good to be the pirate king
Imperial Relations		
Friendly Relations	+0	Normal relations between Drinax and the Imperium
Non-Aggression Pact	+5	Drinax pledges not to attack the Imperium, and vice versa
Favoured Trading	+5	Drinax favours trade with the Imperium, not the Hierate
Defence Pact	-30	The Imperium will come to the aid of Drinax if the Aslan attack
Imperial Naval Base	+10	Drinax will service Imperial scouts and naval patrols at minimal cost
Aslan Relations		
Harsher Levies on Aslan Merchants	+5	Whatever Trade Levies are imposed on the Imperium, the Aslan levy must be at least one level higher (Average if the Imperial Levy is Minimal)
No Non-Aggression Pact with Aslan	+5	The Kingdom will not sign a non-aggression pact with any Aslan clan
Commitment to oppose Aslan expansion	+10	The Kingdom will stop the Aslan from claiming any worlds within its sphere of influence. Cannot be taken if the Travellers have promised not to interfere with Aslan expansion
Other Adjustments		
Piracy punished by death throughout Kingdom	+10	
GeDeCo advisors to all Kingdom governments	+10	Who does not love GeDeCo?
Arranged marriage between senior Drinaxian leader and Imperial noble	+5	Pick a Traveller or nominate a suitable character
Answering for Atrocities	+5 or more	If the Travellers committed any terrible crimes against the Imperium (destroying the Eurisko, freeing the AIs on Neumann, kidnapped the Duke of Tobia's niece), then they must answer for their crimes before an Imperial court. Check out Adventure 2: Prison Planet
Apologies and reparations for piracy	+5	The Travellers must personally pay fines for acts of piracy committed against Imperial ships and individuals. Fines are up to the referee, but should be commensurate with the Travellers wealth

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Aslan Negotiation Adjustments

	Adjustment	Effects
The Blockade		
	Lifting the Blockade	Permits Negotiation
	Also lifting the Jump-2/Jump-3 Blockade	+10
	Lifting the Blockade from other key planets	+1 per planet
Trade Levies		
Minimal Trade Levy	-5	The Kingdom will be impoverished for decades, and risks civil war in the short term and collapse in the medium.
Average Trade Levy	-10	What Princess Rao expected when she planned the rebirth of Drinax – the trade levies will sustain the Kingdom as it grows and matures
Extortionate Trade Levy	-20	It is good to be the pirate king
Aslan Relations		
Friendly Relations	+0	Normal relations between Drinax and the Imperium
Non-Aggression Pact	-10	Drinax pledges not to attack the Hierate. It is not reciprocal – the Aslan reserve the right to move as they wish, kill as they wish.
Favoured Trading	+5	Drinax favours trade with the Hierate, not the Imperium
No Interference	+10	The Kingdom will not attempt to interfere or block Aslan expansion into the Reach. Cannot be taken if the Travellers have agreed to oppose Aslan expansion
Aslan Naval Base	+10	Drinax will service Aslan warships and ihatei migrations
Imperial Relations		
Harsher Levies on Imperial Merchants	+5	Whatever Trade Levies are imposed on the Hierate, the Imperial levy must be at least one level higher (Average if the Aslan Levy is Minimal)
No Defence Pact with the Imperium	+10	The Kingdom will never sign any Defence Pact with the Imperium
Other Adjustments		
Hand over Kasiyl	+10	If Kasiyl is still a renegade after the events of The Prodigal Outcast, handing him over to the Aslan gives a bonus to Standing
Answering for Atrocities	+10 or more	If the Travellers committed any terrible crimes against the Aslan, then they must answer for their crimes
Allowing Aslan settlers	+2 per world	Allowing Aslan to claim territory on Kingdom worlds. Worlds with no water or unbreathable atmospheres do not count.

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